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72
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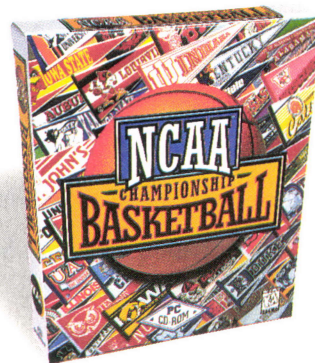
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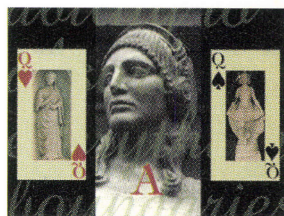
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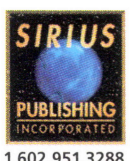
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Contents

What's Up!

6 Editor's Page

8 Letters

10 Game News

Which 3-D graphics boards to bet on, how a company's stock price affects its games, reports from CES, and Star Rangers cheats.

14 Multimedia News

The industry fights compatibility woes; John Hiatt, Carlos Santana, and the Ohio Players plan CD-ROMS.

16 Online News

Gambling on the Internet, high culture goes high-tech, and the latest games on the Total Entertainment Network.

18 Leader Board

The best-selling PC, Mac, and CD-ROM entertainment software.

20 The Ref

In the games biz, it's survival of the biggest, warns Christopher Lindquist. But what does that mean for players?

22 Wirehead

Donald St. John guides you through PC Entertainment Online, our new Web site at <http://www.pcentertainment.com>.

90 Spotlight: Multimedia

We review IBM's bleeding-edge Aptiva computer, multimedia music, Of Mice and Men, and Supermodels in the Rainforest.

Media Mouse sounds like a silly idea, page 96.

IBM's newest Aptiva speeds along at 150MHz, page 96.

Zork Nemesis brings the classic adventure game series back to its dark roots, with state-of-the-art graphics and technology, page 38.

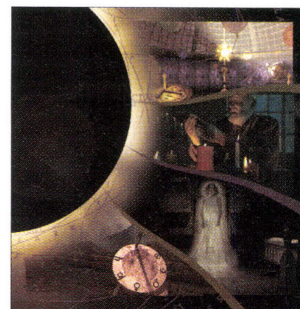


IMAGE COURTESY OF ACTIVISION

Features

25 Macintosh Games: Dead or Alive? By Peter Olafson

DOS and Windows PCs aren't the only ways to play, so how come it's so tough to find great Mac games?

34 CD-ROMs Go Online By David Gerding

Multimedia CD-ROMs give you the good stuff: interactive sound, video, and graphics. And the newest discs keep everything up to date with built-in links to the Internet and commercial online services.

38 Guided Tour: Zork Nemesis By Bill Meyer



You'll want to return to Zork—again. Activision's newest remake of the classic adventure game weaves a dark tale of spirits and suspense. Our exclusive Guided Tour introduces the story and characters, and offers a sneak peek at some truly spellbinding imagery.



Syndicate Wars will bring action and strategy to you PC, page 10.

You won't find many kicks on this look at Route 66, page 92.



Game of the Month

- 44 Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Action Games

- 46 Ice & Fire, Earthworm Jim
48 BrainDead 13
50 The Terminator: Future Shock

Action/Adventure

- 54 CyberMage: Darklight Awakening

Adventure

- 56 Dark Seed II
58 A Gabriel Knight Mystery:
The Beast Within
60 Psychic Detective
62 Chronomaster
64 Congo: Descent Into Zinj
66 Bad Day on the Midway

Brain Drain

- 68 Island Casino

Fly & Drive

- 70 EF2000

Role-Playing Games

- 72 Shannara
74 Druid: Daemons of the Mind

Sports Games

- 76 PBA Bowling

Strategy Games

- 78 Allied General
80 Great Naval Battles IV
82 Police Quest: SWAT
84 This Means War!
85 Power Dolls, Battles in Time

Game Hardware

- 88 Advanced Gravis' Thunderbird and Firebird, ACT Laboratories' NovaStick Max, and InterAct Multimedia's PC Flight Force Fire Control System.

Take to the European
skies in EF2000,
page 70.



Origin goes Doom-y with
CyberMage, page 54.



Warcraft II makes a great game even
better, page 44.

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Tech Shop

100 A Better Browser?

The World Wide Web is the place to be, but what's the best way to get there? Check out six top Web browsers and learn which one is right for you.

102 Wanted: A \$500 Computer

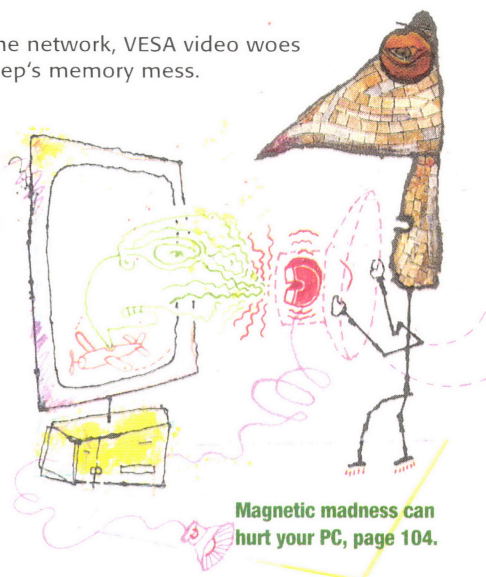
"Network Computers," cheap systems that hook up to the Internet, are the talk of the town. Are they a dream come true or a gamer's worst nightmare?

104 S.O.S.

Building your own game network, VESA video woes for Druid, and Stonekeep's memory mess.



Macintosh gaming
makes a stand,
page 25.



Magnetic madness can
hurt your PC, page 104.



Fredric Paul

PC Entertainment

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Multi-Multimedia

Let's be honest: Computers just aren't much fun unless they have a CD-ROM drive. Everybody knows you need a CD's vast storage capacity to get all the slick video, high-quality audio, and exciting animation that power your favorite titles.

But CD-ROMs aren't perfect. It takes time to press and distribute those shiny little discs, and in this business, things can change mighty quickly. As contributor David Gerding points out in "CD-ROMs Go Online" (page 34), a CD may hold lots of stuff, but only the Internet and commercial online services can deliver up-to-the-minute information. To keep up, a growing number of multimedia producers—and even some game makers—are building online links into their latest offerings. When it's done right, combining the two media gives you the best of both worlds: You don't know—and don't care—where the disc stops and the Internet begins.

Of course, multimedia and games aren't the only things that can benefit from the Internet. Magazines can, too. So *PC Entertainment* is hitting the Net.

Introducing PC Entertainment Online, our very own site on the World Wide Web. Just point your favorite web browser to <http://www.pcentertainment.com>. (If you need help choosing a browser, see "A Better Browser?" page 100.) You'll find the latest news, timely commentary, expanded features, hot links, and all sorts of cool stuff about games, multimedia, and the Internet. For a complete menu of what's available at PC Entertainment Online, turn to Webmaster Donald St. John's Wirehead column on page 22. Every issue, veteran Netsurfer St. John uses this space to tell you about what's hot online. Now, he gets to tell you about the cybersite he knows best: the one he built himself.

Finally, one of the nicest things about the World Wide Web is that you can enjoy it from a PC or Mac. Of course, that's not true of a lot of games. As PCs based on Intel's chip architecture spread like wildfire and rumors of Apple's imminent demise continue to circulate, millions of Macintosh owners are worried about being left out in the dark, boring cold. But in "Macintosh Games: Dead or Alive?" (page 25), contributing editor Peter Olafson finds a ray of hope for non-"Wintel" types. Although Mac owners will probably never be able to enjoy all of the amusements created for DOS and Windows, developers are porting more and more games to Apple's machines.

Here at *PC Entertainment*, we've never lost the faith. (Don't be misled by the name: "PC" means all kinds of personal computers, not just "Wintel.")

We cover entertainment for DOS, Windows, and Macintosh, and unlike many of our competitors, our monthly CD-ROM runs equally well on Windows and Macs. (The *PC Entertainment* disc comes free with most newsstand copies or with a premium subscription. To upgrade your subscription, call 800-688-4575.)

With our new Web site, *PC Entertainment* becomes a truly multimedia publication: print, disc, and online for PCs and Macs. It's important to us that everyone be able to join in the fun.

FP

Tell me what you think! Send e-mail to fpaul@iftw.com; fax me at 415-349-7482; or send snail mail to Editor, *PC Entertainment*, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404.

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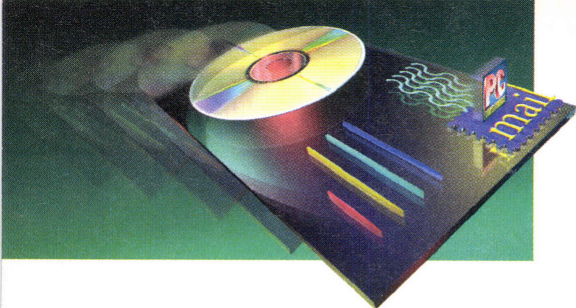
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Letters

What's in a Name?

Being a Mac user, I am not too happy about your magazine's name change. But, being a business-school graduate with a degree in marketing, I understand it. I do think, though, that at first glance a Mac user would not buy the magazine because of the new name. I think that your covers need to express your coverage of Mac titles, or a new Mac readership will be lost.

Other than that, I enjoy your magazine and will continue to subscribe.

Jason Hirschhorn
Jasonh@inch.com

We will continue to cover Mac games and multimedia titles as they become available. See "Mac Games: Dead or Alive?" page 25. —Ed.

Multimedia Music Lover

In Panama we received your magazine for the first time last April. Since then it has become my favorite place to get information and in-depth analysis on the computer-entertainment scene. I would like to see more reviews of multimedia music.

Also, do you have a World Wide Web site? If so, what is the address?

Alvaro Higuero
alvaroxh@pananet.com

Good news! Our new Web address is www.pcentertainment.com. For more information, see the Wirehead column on page 30. And for the latest in multimedia music, watch for our Music Box write-up each month in the Spotlight section. —Ed.

Mal de Mer

Submarine games seem to get particularly short shrift in your magazine. I've looked in vain for a review of Sierra On-Line's *Aces of the Deep* and Mindscape's *Silent Hunter* and have no idea whether these products would be worth purchasing. Considering that 75 percent of the planet is covered by oceans and lakes, you seem to have a case of hydrophobia.

Robert B. Smith
Florence, AZ

*So, you think we're all wet, eh? We have certainly covered sub-based games in the past, including SSN-21 *Seawolf* (page 80) and *Subwar 2050* (page 83) back in April 1994. We looked at the original *Aces of the Deep* (page 92) back in August 1994 and gave it a middling review. The new version of *Aces* runs under Windows 95 and includes better graphics. As for *Silent Hunter*, it's running behind schedule and had not shipped as of press time. Look for a review soon. —Ed.*

Behind the Scenes

I have been a game fan since video games first appeared. Now, with the explosion of CD-ROMs, I am even more fascinated by the industry. I want to learn more about the game-making process, and especially the people who create them and their back-grounds.

H.L.O.
Cagvas, PR

Check out "The Making of Cyberia²" (Electronic Entertainment, November 1995, page 60) for the nuts and bolts of developing a hit game. Also, look at our story "Gaming Goes to College," (January 1996, page 13) for formal training in the art of making games. —Ed.

What Lemmings Like

I read the review of our client's game, 3D *Lemmings*, in your December 1995 issue (Electronic Entertainment, page 166). I am disappointed that the writer felt that the inclusion of Jelly Belly imagery in some levels was an "annoying commercialization."

To put the record straight, the makers of *Jelly Bellies* paid no money whatsoever for the inclusion of their graphics. Rather, the guys at Clockwork Games discovered that we at PMA Sales Promotion were organizing a pack promotion with the company for Sony. Being major fans of *Jelly Belly*, they asked if they could add the beans and imagery to complement the game's six other "candy levels." Let's face it: Can you imagine *Lemmings* eating anything other than *Jelly Bellies*?

Mark Cluer
UK

*Actually, we never imagined *Lemmings* eating any particular brand of candy. —Ed.*

More! More!

You guys need more codes! I love your magazine, but there are barely any codes.

Preston Smith
Kingston, PA

We try to include any codes we can get our hands on before each issue goes to print. However, unlike arcade and cartridge companies, many PC game makers are loathe to release their cheats and codes until a game has been out awhile. However, you can always find newly revealed game codes in our Game News section. —Ed.

Whoops

In Leader Board (Electronic Entertainment, December 1995, page 20), you mistakenly wrote that in *MechWarrior 2* you can align with the Wolf or Raven clan. It should read "Lowly Wolf or Illustrious Jade Falcon clan."

W. Burningham "Talon" Falcon's Claws
Sonora, CA

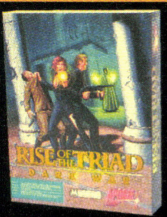


You dare accuse us of a mistake, freeborn scum? Well, er, you're right. That's Jade Falcon, not Raven. —Ed.

Got something you want to get off your chest? Do it! Write, fax, or e-mail us at: Letters to the Editor, c/o PC Entertainment, 951 Mariner's Island Blvd., Suite 700, San Mateo, CA 94404; fax: 415-349-7482; Internet address, e2Letters@iftw.com; and Compu-Serve: 73361,265.

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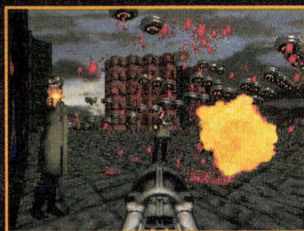
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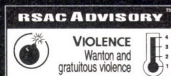


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launched [Outpost] to make that quarter. It hasn't happened since, and it won't happen again."

HoloByte, argues that going public has a positive impact on a company and its products—if it doesn't change the organization's attitude toward product development.

"It can be good for consumers because the company obtains the resources to do the highest-quality products," he says.

"On the other hand, if companies just manage day by day to Wall Street's expectations, it can have an ill effect."

Louie points out that revenue from going public helped Spectrum merge with MicroProse and obtain popular licenses like Top Gun.

But Rand Bleimeister, senior vice president of sales and marketing at Virgin Interactive, owned by Spelling Entertainment, sees the problem of making quarters instead of the best games extending industrywide. "In 1995, 90 percent of the titles from publicly traded companies were released in the last two weeks of each quarter," claims Bleimeister.

Whatever its effect on games, going public means big bucks to company founders and execs, so look for the trend to continue. Inside word is that Trilobyte, maker of *The 7th Guest* and *The 11th Hour*, may be the latest high-profile outfit considering an IPO.

—Bill Meyer

—Bill Meyer

As the games business booms, small, privately held developers are rapidly turning into large, publicly traded companies (see “Merger Mania,” page 20). Not surprisingly, the growing number of mergers, acquisitions, and initial public offerings (IPOs) affects the games you buy as game companies try to satisfy both Wall Street and consumers.

"There definitely are positives and negatives to being a publicly traded company," believes Mike Brochu, president of Sierra On-Line. On the plus side, Brochu says, selling stock generates needed capital, gives employees an equity stake in the company, and offers the possibility of wider distribution. But it also elicits the scrutiny and judgments of Wall Street analysts and investors: "Dealing with 'The Street' and [its] expectations is a real tough job."

A big problem is the temptation to ship a product before it's finished in order to boost earnings at the end of a quarter and temporarily gain Wall Street's approval. That's how Sierra's Outpost, for example, came to be released without many of its promised features.

"We are never going to do that again," declares Brochu. "We



This spring, Bullfrog will release a sequel to *Syndicate*, the game that arguably kicked off the whole action-strategy genre and inspired the likes of *X-COM*, *Jagged Alliance*, and *Warcraft*.

Syndicate Wars picks up the Syndicate story 100 years after the ruthless Corporation has eliminated its enemies throughout the world and brainwashed the population. Insurrection is on the rise as the chips implanted in Earth's

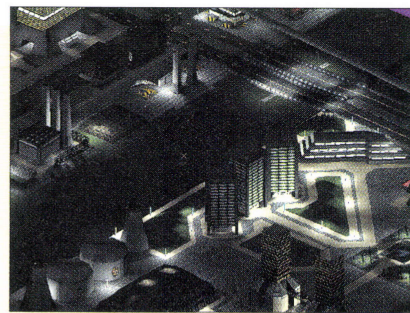
trol of entire cities. You portray a Corporation executive bent on breaking the resistance or a church elder or biker leader dedicated to dismantling the evil

Syndicate Wars features an upgraded game engine with Super VGA graphics and large, complex missions that can require traveling to multiple cities. Also, expect branching missions in which your objectives change if you fail the primary objective.

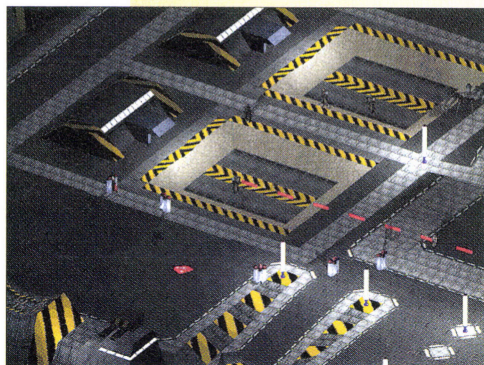
More good news: you'll be able to arm your troops with a host of new weapons, including handheld lasers, napalm mines, and razor wire that slices victims in two. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; \$59.95)

—Bill Meyer

-Bill Meyer



Updated graphics, longer missions, and a new storyline mark this upcoming sequel.



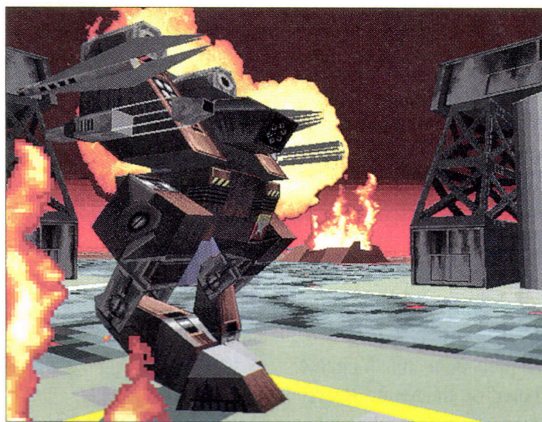
Expect plenty of carnage in Syndicate Wars.

Sierra Sequels

This spring and summer, Sierra On-Line will ship more than ten titles, including two sequels sure to pique gamers' interest.

At the top of the list is **EarthSiege 2**, due in March. This one's designed to give MechWarrior 2 a run for its money. ES2 features Super VGA graphics, nine texture-mapped HERCS, a RAZOR air weapon, dynamic visual effects, a host of configuration options and weapons, and more than 50 missions.

Springtime will also let you take to the air with **Red Baron II**, which returns PC aviators to the skies over World War I Europe. Fly for France, Britain, America, or Germany in career mode, and climb through the ranks to squadron commander to plan and execute each mission. Select single multiplayer missions for cooperative and competitive play in any one of 40 authentic WWI biplanes. (Pilots who can't wait can take off now in **Silent Thunder: A-10 Revenge**, designed for both aces and greenhorns. This sim serves up 24 missions, texture-mapped ter-



EarthSiege 2 aims to end MechWarrior 2's supremacy.

rains and targets, and campaigns over Korea, Colombia, and the Middle East.)

In the summer, keep an eye out for **Robert E. Lee: Civil War General**, featuring eight historically accurate battles plus a fantasy battle for Washington, D.C.; the outlandish **Lighthouse**, in which a humble tower acts as a portal to an alternate universe; and the sci-fi adventure **Rama**, based on the works of novelists Arthur C. Clarke and Gentry Lee. And, as the summer winds down, **Leisure Suit Larry 7** will terrorize a cruise ship. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707)

—Bill Meyer

scouting REPORT

■ Interactive Magic, maker of the Apache helicopter combat sim, plans to release a sequel based on the Soviet supercopter, the **Hind**. The game should include combat theaters that overlap with those in Apache, allowing multiplayer conflicts between Russian and U.S. choppers. (Interactive Magic; 800-789-1534)

■ U.S. Gold is celebrating the 1996 Summer Olympics with a series of 3-D sports games due out in April. **Olympic Volume 1** will cover track and field events, with Volume 2 concentrating on sports such as fencing and equestrian riding. In May, **Olympic Soccer** from Britain's Silicon Dreams will ship with real stadiums, this year's players, and a new game engine providing realistic dribbling and kicking. **Dream Team 3**, developed by Regal Productions, will take the court in June. (U.S. Gold; 415-693-0297)

■ The ImagiNation Network has launched **The Ruins of Cawdor**, the third in a series of online role-playing adventures. Based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the game lets you and a diverse party of online adventurers explore six levels of the Cawdor Keep. (ImagiNation Network; 800-462-4461)

■ Microsoft has acquired BAO, developer of Microsoft's Flight Simulator. The first post-acquisition release will be Microsoft Flight Simulator for Windows 95. Meanwhile, Domark Software has merged with Eidos, Simis, and Big Red. Available now from Domark is **Deathtrap Dungeon** for DOS, based on the popular *Fighting Fantasy* novels.

■ Access Software has released two new courses in its Links Championship Course line: Chicago's **Cog Hill Golf and Country Club** and an enhanced version of the **Mauna Kea** course. Look for both DOS courses for \$29.95. (Access Software; 800-793-0073)

■ i-Motion has released versions
continued on page 12

3-D Hot, 3-D Not 3-D is hot. Small startups like Rendition and established graphics chip makers such as S3 are busy evangelizing their 3-D solutions to game developers and board and system makers. Here's the inside track on what's hot and what's not.

Company	The Buzz	Support	Ship Date
3D Labs PERMEDIA	Scalding. 3-D functionality is five times better than first-generation competition, including 3D Labs' custom chip for Creative's 3D Blaster; 2-D acceleration is better than S3's best 2-D chip, the Vision968. Should land on \$250 boards with real pixel-pushing power.	Creative Labs (next-generation 3-D Blaster), Televideo	Summer '96
Rendition Vérité	Hot. Most popular first-generation 3-D chip with the game community; used as a benchmark for new chip sets entering the market. Forges a middle ground between high-end 3-D and 2-D solutions with basic 3-D functionality.	Creative Labs, Number Nine	Spring '96
3dfx Voodoo Graphics 3D	Warm. Superior specs and red-hot features, but no real hardware yet. Game developers harbor a wait-and-see attitude. This two-chip solution will be limited to more expensive add-on cards.	Orchid Technology, Fujitsu	Spring '96
NVIDIA NV1	Lukewarm. Cool technology, but difficult for developers to support. Chip set likely to be incompatible with Microsoft's Direct 3D API, meaning it texture-maps flat polygons poorly. Offers fair 2-D acceleration, but 3-D functionality lags behind Rendition's chip.	Diamond Multimedia (Edge 3D)	Available
S3 VIRGE	Lukewarm. S3 says 3-D will be its primary focus in '96, yet this updated Trio chip lacks speed and advanced special effects. On the flipside, S3 has deep pockets, production muscle, and OEM connections. This single, bargain-priced chip could find its way onto lots of system motherboards.	Hercules, Orchid Technology, STB Systems	Early '96
Cirrus Logic Laguna 3D	Lukewarm. Cirrus Logic is planning to supply add-on card manufacturers with the Laguna 3D, but will market its single, all-in-one chip mainly to system manufacturers for use on motherboards. Hence, the chip may have high volume potential.	Unannounced	Fall '96
Yamaha YGV612 3D	Cold. Give Yamaha credit for braving the 3-D waters first, but early adopters will see little software support from game developers, as superior chips are already on the market.	Philips (Paradise Tasmania)	Available

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Shakii The Wolf once ruled the peaceful kingdom of Shake until the evil, almost invincible Lion Warrior **Midnight Sword** appeared - plunging the land of Shake into an abyss of chaos and darkness.

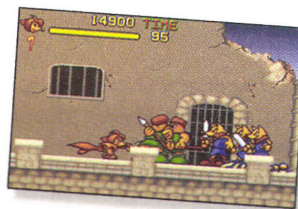
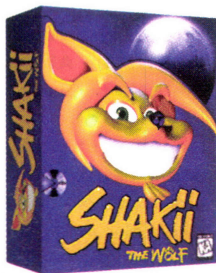


With your help, **Shakii The Wolf** must now gather his powers together and prepare for a final showdown with **Midnight Sword** and his legion of merciless warriors.



Explore the world of **Shakii** - a world populated by imaginative characters, detailed landscapes, and exotic places, where the ultimate battle of good versus evil holds an entire kingdom as its prize.

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- The latest in Japanese style animation
- Several sensational, scrolling graphic environments
- Specialized "attack" keys and unique tools
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SHAKII

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news FLASH

If you've ever bought a new game or multimedia title that simply wouldn't work on your computer, help is coming. Industry groups and retailers are working furiously on ways to solve this all-too-common problem.



IMA



ers to adopt uniform labeling of a product's requirements in a format that corresponds with the CD MATCH printout.

the IMA on the CD MATCH program.)

The Software Publishers Association (SPA) agrees with the IMA on the need for uniform labeling and is issuing its own set of packaging guidelines. SPA-compliant packaging should also be showing up in software stores soon. The SPA plan doesn't include system diagnostics, but the organization plans to step up consumer awareness efforts this spring in conjunction with its Codie awards.

While the standards organizations duke it out, a couple of big retailers are addressing the problem on their own. Blockbuster Video, for example, has Blockbuster **PC MatchMaker**. This floppy disk-based program, priced at \$10 but available free at Blockbuster when you rent a CD-ROM, analyzes your system's configuration and checks for compatibility with Blockbuster's own inventory of CD-ROM titles. The company plans to update the disk every 60 to 90 days to keep up with changes in the stores' CD-ROM collection.

Meanwhile, retail giant Toys "R" Us is undertaking its own customer-education program as it expands from video games to PC software. Working with Intel, Toys "R" Us has produced *Software For Kids: A Parents' Guide*, a pamphlet designed to educate parents and help them choose software titles. It also includes a hardware chart where you can fill in your computer's hardware components and instructions for using the MS-DOS command MSD, which assesses some of your system's configurations.

Of course, no single approach will solve all compatibility issues—and competition among these programs may even spark some new problems. Taken together though, these efforts demonstrate that the software entertainment industry has finally begun to take the compatibility dilemma seriously.

—Ann M. Marcus

—Ann M. Marcus

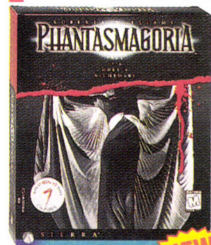
■ Expect a new crop of **multimedia music** projects to make its way to the marketplace in 1996. One of the latest announcements is from roots rocker **John Hiatt**, who's done an enhanced CD that's free to anyone who purchases selected discs from his Capitol Records labelmates at Musicland or Sam Goody stores. Capitol plans an expanded version for full retail release later this year. Also, funk bands **Cameo** and the **Ohio Players** will release enhanced CDs on the Intersound label, drawn from an Atlanta concert they did together last December. And cosmic blues/jazz guitarist **Carlos Santana** will check in toward the end of the year with a full CD-ROM that'll trace his 30-year career and his influences, including John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Jimi Hendrix.

■ **Lines in the Sand** is a CD-ROM magazine produced in Canada that analyzes the Middle East peace process. This Windows and Macintosh disc features news and commentary on events in the region; a timeline of the historical conflicts between Jews and Arabs; and an archive of treaties, United Nations resolutions, and other documents and information pertinent to the Middle East. (Tiger Media; 800-531-9333; \$69)

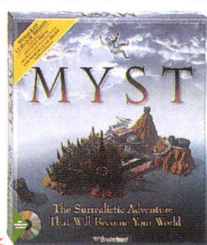
■ Rock's most famous recording studio is going multimedia. **Abbey Road**, the EMI-owned location in London where the Beatles recorded virtually all of their music, has geared up for the production of enhanced CDs with a Macintosh-based facility. Artists will be able to work on all aspects of an enhanced CD there, including the video and animation portions. Abbey Road aims to produce about 20 of these discs this year, studio officials said.

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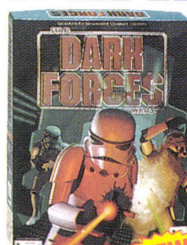
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Adventure 5050505

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Corel Gallery

Clip Art Lib. 5010301

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Nascar Racing

Driving Sim. 5001300

DOS	386/40	8mb	M	J
			K	

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Arcade Style 5046602

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Martial Arts Explorer

Historical 5049804

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POLYDOK, LOTTERIES, AND FREE CASINO NOW OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Online News

The Net Craps Out

INTERNET CASINOS

With most operations just gearing up now, it's still too early to assess just how pervasive the online gambling phenomenon will be. But Michael Simone, president of Antigua-based Sports International (SI)—a sports book operation that handled \$48.4 million in phone-based gambling in 1994 (and whose parent firm



is publicly traded on NASDAQ)—thinks it can match or even surpass that number via the Internet, starting this June at its Web site at <http://www.intersphere.com/bet/>

There's certainly no lack of offshore venues gearing up to enter the wagering fray. Typically, operators locate in such countries as the Bahamas and other Caribbean locales; Central American nations such as Belize (home of WagerNet, one of the first Net gambling offerings, at <http://www.vegas.com/wagnet/>) and Costa Rica; and the tiny European nations of Monaco and Liechtenstein, both legendary for their casinos.

However, even overseas gambling sites are cautious about the U.S., where most forms of gambling are still illegal anywhere but inside a licensed casino. For example, Internet Casinos, a site already operating out of the Caribbean's Turks and Caicos Islands at <http://www.casino.org>, warns Americans not to place a bet (and lobbies them to call their congressman and the attorney general to complain). Perhaps that's with good reason: Minnesota has already sued WagerNet's parent company, On Ramp Internet Computer Services, charging that it constitutes an illegal bookmaking operation. At the very least, most sites will require you to establish a prepaid debit account.

But not everyone is America-phobic. In InterLotto, Liechtenstein's national lottery, anyone with an Internet account and credit card can buy a shot at matching six numbers by going to <http://www.interlotto.li>. Then there are direct-dial gambling networks, the wagering equivalent of bulletin boards. One such service, Las Vegas Online, invites players to play slots, roulette, and other games of chance by dialing direct to Monaco. For Americans, the benefit is fairly obvious—such services are much harder to trace by federal or state authorities.

What the U.S. does have is a large number of gambling how-to sites, where you can learn about odds and strategies and hear reports from the world of betting. A great wrap-up spot to check out is Rolling Good Times Online, a newsletter and gambling site powerlink at <http://www.RGTOonline.com>. We wager there will be a lot more discussion on the topic before the final tally is in.

—Donald St. John

Branding the Web

Is the World Wide Web a consumer paradise? It's getting there: A quarter of the nation's top 200 consumer brands are aboard the Web, and more are on the way. Right now, high-tech companies lead the pack, but expect more consumer-product firms to even the balance in the next two years.

Percentage of top 200 consumer brands
on the World Wide Web: 25

Percentage on the Web by 1997: 75

Source: Forrester Research, Cambridge, Mass.

A Bit of Breeding

Although the World Wide Web is certainly rich in pop culture, producers and connoisseurs of more high culture can find a home there, too, at **Culturefinder** (<http://culturefinder.com>). As its main attraction, this repository for information about classical music, dance, opera, and other fine arts lists the schedules for performances worldwide, including the programs of more than 200 orchestras. The site also features news from the various artistic disciplines, of the gossipy-yet-informative sort that you might find in *Rolling Stone's* Random Notes—comings and



Culturefinder relies on the interest of its fans...and some well-heeled sponsors.

goings, passings, events, and the like. It's also added interviews with such stars of the classical music scene as Andre Watts, James Galway, and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, and features reviews of classical CDs from the well-regarded European magazine *Classic CD*.

Yet another interesting aspect of Culturefinder is its participatory quality: Much of the information comes from fans of the performing arts community (dubbed, naturally, Culture Finders). Culturefinder also sponsors spring and summer internships for students interested in arts management; information is available at the Web site.

—Donald St. John

Building, Shooting & Chatting on the Net

Games, the Internet, and more: That's what the Total Entertainment Network (TEN) aims to bring you. The fledgling fun-oriented network, in beta testing throughout 1995, is finally online with a slew of games and a full Internet presence that includes a graphical Usenet newsgroup display, chat areas, and World Wide Web access.

Start with the games. Like XBAND, TEN is aiming to score with proven titles. The service will carry the online premieres of *SimCity*, *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Falcon 4.0*, *Panzer General*, and *CivNet*, among others. Future store-shelf copies of most of the titles will include the ability to connect to TEN right from the disc.

Some game genres—particularly twitch games such as fighters and Doom-style action games—have

fared poorly with online play because of slow response times. TEN president Daniel Goldman says his service hopes to overcome that problem by hooking into the Concentric Network, which features quick network response and a nationwide system of Internet dial-ins throughout the U.S. and Canada.

TEN also touts its Internet access as an advantage over other gaming networks. TEN plans to be a full Internet service provider, with the ability to reach the World Wide Web



SimCity is one of the many popular titles that you'll be able to play online on the Total Entertainment Network.

and other Net features, and TEN will itself be reachable via the Internet. But Goldman says the focus is on slow, steady growth with game- and entertainment-oriented users: "We're not looking for big numbers right off; we'd almost rather not have that. We're looking for people who get it, who like to play." (Total Entertainment Network: 800-804-0836; <http://www.ten.net>; cost is \$7.50/month plus \$2.50/hour for first ten dialups, or \$1/hour with outside Internet connection)

—Donald St. John

off the WIRE

■ Searching the World Wide Web—or even the whole universe of Usenet newsgroups—just got a whole lot easier with a new search spider developed by Digital Equipment. **Alta Vista**, which consists of a lightning-fast search engine, lets you do complex search routines to find Web pages or Usenet messages containing one or more word strings.

It updates Usenet feeds as they appear, so the information you search will be completely up to date on the same day it's posted. Test the free beta version of Alta Vista at <http://www.altavista.digital.com>.

■ The threads of a story can take strange and intriguing twists as they're passed from one listener to the next. That's the idea behind **The Narrative Corpse**, a comic-art chain story on the Web done 3 panels at a time by 69 different artists. Contributors include such well-known comic artists as R. Crumb (*Keep On Truckin'*), Matt Groening (*The Simpsons*), and Art Spiegelman (*Maus*).

The Web site is accessible on a subscription-only basis at Voyager's <http://www.voyagerco.com> address; a credit-card charge of \$3 gets you unlimited access to the whole series of strips, which began on January 17.

■ Reprise Records has certainly subscribed to the online way of doing business. The label has paired with Apple Computer for production of all of its digital projects (including its Web site at <http://reprise-erec.com> and its new series of enhanced CDs), and label president Marie Klein went a step farther by signing its latest band, Love In Reverse, after a series of negotiations held entirely online.

Leader Board

The best-selling PC and Mac games and multimedia entertainment software



Role playing and first-person action go hand in hand in Hexen, debuting at No. 2 on the PC Games list.



Stonekeep breaks into the Top 10 at No. 4 with intelligent game play and impressive graphics.

PC Games					
RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING	
1	Myst Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles propel this venerable adventure back to the top of the Leader Board. (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Win CD; \$54.95)	2	19	*****	
2	Hexen New monsters, simple puzzles, and a role-playing element give a fresh look to this solid Doom-style game. (GT Interactive; 800-434-2637; DOS CD; \$49)	—	1	****1/2	
3	Microsoft Flight Simulator 5.1 Upgraded graphics and new features keep this hugely popular flight sim near the top of the Board. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; DOS, DOS CD; \$59.95)	1	5	****	
4	Stonekeep Role-playing reaches new heights in this cleverly designed game spanning 12 locales and 23 levels. (Interplay; 800-969-4263; DOS CD; \$59.95)	—	1	*****	
5	Phantasmagoria Adrienne's dream home in the country becomes a hellish nightmare in Sierra's seven-disc, full-motion-video adventure. (Sierra On-Line; 800-757-7707; Win/DOS CD; \$69.95)	4	4	****1/2	
6	Monopoly Deluxe Great graphics, sound, and animations—plus Internet play—breathe new life into this classic board game. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS, Windows, Win CD; \$49.99)	—	1	****	
7	Command & Conquer Engage the evil Brotherhood of Nod in more than a dozen missions in this action-oriented strategy game. (Virgin Interactive Entertainment; 800-874-4607; DOS CD; \$59.95)	3	3	***	
8	The Ultimate Doom Thy Flesh Consumed All three original episodes of Doom, plus nine perilous new levels, on one action-packed CD-ROM. (GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; DOS CD; \$30)	5	4	—	
9	Dark Forces A clever twist on the Doom concept, featuring more strategy and a cast of <i>Star Wars</i> characters. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; DOS CD; street price \$44.95)	—	7	****	
10	MechWarrior 2 Align with the mighty Wolf or Jade Falcon Clan to do battle in an assortment of awesome Mechs in <i>PC Entertainment's</i> Game of the Year. (Activision; 800-477-3650; DOS CD; \$59.95)	10	4	****1/2	

Mac Games					
RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING	
1	Myst Stunning visuals, haunting audio, and intriguing puzzles propel this venerable adventure back to the top of the Leader Board. (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; Mac CD; \$54.95)	2	24	*****	
2	Doom II Doom arrives on the Mac in this hair-raising sequel, complete with more than 30 levels and 7 hellish new creatures. (GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; Mac, Mac CD; street price \$40–\$50)	1	5	****1/2	
3	Dark Forces A clever twist on the Doom concept, featuring more strategy and a cast of <i>Star Wars</i> characters—now for the Mac. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; Mac CD; street price \$44.95)	3	5	****1/2	
4	Rebel Assault Intense graphics and furious <i>Star Wars</i> action highlight this classic shooter. (LucasArts Entertainment; 800-782-7927; Mac CD; \$19.95)	4	13	****	
5	SimCity 2000 Build your own city of the future with this improved version of the classic urban-simulation game. (Maxis; 800-336-2947; Mac, \$49.95; Mac CD, \$69.95)	5	24	*****	
6	Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster Escape the clutches of your mad creator, Dr. Frankenstein, in this visually compelling video adventure. (Interplay; 800-969-4263; Mac CD; \$49.95)	—	1	****1/2	
7	Marathon 2: Durandal Improved game play and graphics make the action even hotter as you once again attempt to eliminate the insidious Pthor. (Bungie Software; 800-295-0060; Mac, Mac CD; \$48)	—	1	—	
8	SimCity 2000 CD Collection Armed with SimCity 2000, Great Disasters Vol. One, and The Urban Renewal Kit, you'll be a master planner in no time. (Maxis; 800-336-2947; Mac CD; \$59.95)	9	4	*****	
9	Links Pro CD Macintosh Photorealistic courses and players as well as humorous sound bites set this groundbreaking golf game apart. (Access Software; 800-800-4880; Mac; \$69.95)	6	10	****	
10	Caesar's Palace Venture to Vegas and try your luck at blackjack, craps, roulette, video poker, and even horse racing. (MacPlay; 800-874-4607; Mac; \$19.99)	10	4	—	

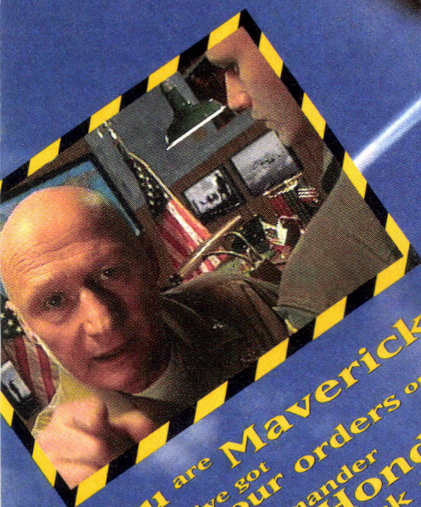
Multimedia Entertainment Titles					
RATING	TITLE	LAST MONTH	MONTHS ON CHART	OUR RATING	
1	Microsoft Encarta The latest installment of the best-selling encyclopedia tops the charts with online updates and more videos, photos, articles, and maps. Also includes final sales of last year's version. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win CD, Mac CD; \$54.95)	1	21	****1/2	
2	Disney's Animated StoryBook: Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree Introduce your children to Pooh Bear in one of his classic misadventures. (Disney Interactive; 800-688-1520; Win CD, Mac CD; \$32.95)	3	3	****1/2	
3	After Dark Windows 95 Berkeley Systems' tribute to Windows 95 includes new modules and features. (Berkeley Systems; 800-344-5541; Win 95 CD; \$29.95)	2	3	—	
4	Dr. Seuss's ABC's Favorites Icabod and Izzy host this alphabet soup chock full of silly characters and clever animations. (Living Books; 800-776-4724; Win/Mac CD, Win 95 CD, Power Mac CD; \$37)	5	2	*****	
5	Family Tree Maker Deluxe Organize your family history in an easy-to-understand format, complete with home videos and photographs. (Brøderbund; 800-521-6263; DOS, Win, Win CD; \$58)	—	1	—	

Leader Board is a compilation of top-selling computer games and multimedia entertainment titles in 1,300 retail stores for November 1995. It excludes CD "packs" that contain both games and multimedia titles, generally composed of older products. "Months On Chart" does not necessarily indicate consecutive months. Source: PC Data

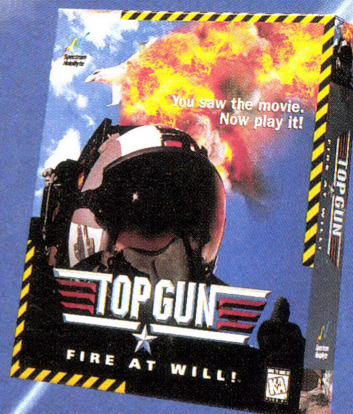
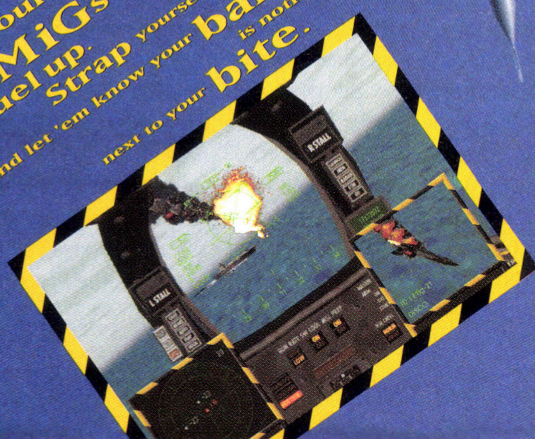
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mind, Commander Hondo
on your back and
MiGs on your tail.
So fuel up.
Strap yourself in.
And let 'em know your bark
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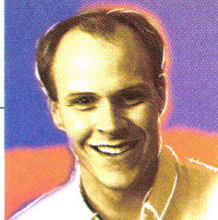
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Merger Mania

The urge to merge has descended upon the computer-gaming industry like a pack of lawyers. The big fish are swallowing the little fish in a fanatical battle for buyers, sellers, and a stable stock price.

Truth is, many game companies are nervous. With hundreds of game makers and thousands of titles vying for space—both on the shelves and on your hard drive—it's only a matter of time before a shakeout culls the weak from the strong. Securing room on retail shelves is tougher than ever; you need financial clout to get the big chain stores' attention and guarantee a place for your game. That's a tall order for a small company these days.

Talk to industry pundits and game-company leaders, and they'll all tell you the same thing: Within the next couple of years, computer-game companies will have to be big players—or be in cahoots with big players—if they want a shot at making it into the mass-market channels like CompUSA and WalMart. And when they say “big,” they're talking \$300–\$400 million in sales or more. Right now, only a couple of companies—Electronic Arts and Microsoft—come close to fitting the bill.

Others, including Sierra On-Line, Spectrum HoloByte, Virgin, Mindscape, and Interplay, are busily striking deals designed to get themselves there.

Lately, Sierra seems to be the most merger-

happy outfit of all. It recently gobbled up Impressions Software (Caesar II), Papyrus (NASCAR Racing), and flight-sim maven SubLOGIC, with more companies sure to follow. (One rumor even pegs Spectrum HoloByte as the next candidate.) Electronic Arts, meanwhile, has bought Britain's Bullfrog (Magic Carpet, Dungeon Keeper) and Texas' Origin Systems (the Wing Commander series, Crusader: No Remorse). And even smaller companies are getting in on the action, including Capstone (which recently picked up 360 Software, maker of Harpoon) and Domark (which combined with Eidos, a video-compression

company, and game developers Simis and Big Red).

But what does all this mergers and acquisitions stuff mean for us, the players? Well, if you believe the PR-speak, it spells larger companies with more resources to devote to ever-better games. That may be true, but only in part, and only for certain types of games.

In reality, the computer-game industry seems headed toward a music-industry model: A few very large megacorps controlling the majority of the mainstream market while smaller, independent labels make their money satisfying niches.

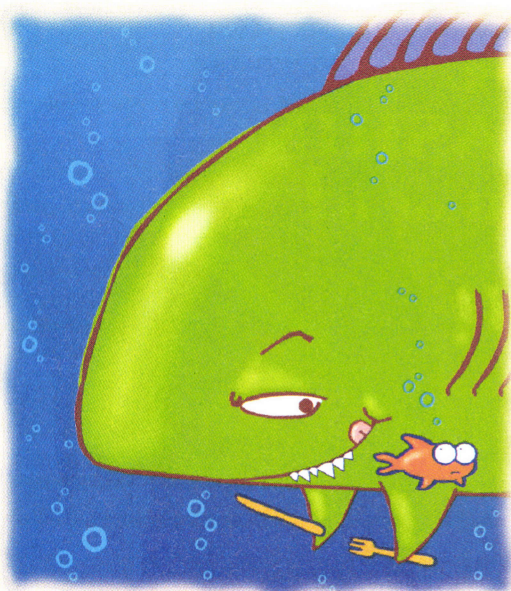
That's not the best news for gamers. The computer-game market just might end up looking like the music biz: a “mass market” of casual listeners who “don't know much about music but know what they like,” dictating which artists get hyped and who gets ignored. If that happens to games, we're likely to see a lot of slick, short, easy-to-play titles that will appeal to the masses, and fewer and fewer titles

aimed at hard-core gamers looking for serious challenges.

Worse, while it's fairly cheap to record and distribute an independent audio CD (indie makers can put together a disc for a few thousand dollars in studio time), creating a quality game costs serious money—money the big game companies may not be so willing to spend if they're busy pumping millions into the next megahit starring Tom Cruise and Sylvester Stallone.

As a result, gamers' games may become harder and harder to find. With any luck, game companies catering to the faithful will find cheaper ways to distribute their wares to the people who want them. Many already use the Internet as a means of spreading the word, and future electronic distribution systems via cable TV or satellite may help as well.

But developers still need to be able to make a fiduciary argument for spending the money necessary to produce a quality title. To do that, they'll need an audience—an audience you're already part of and can help grow. Like role-playing games? Try to get your buddies interested. Got a thing for hard-core adventures? Talk 'em up online whenever you get a chance. It may seem like a small thing, but it could be those new players who keep your games of choice coming.



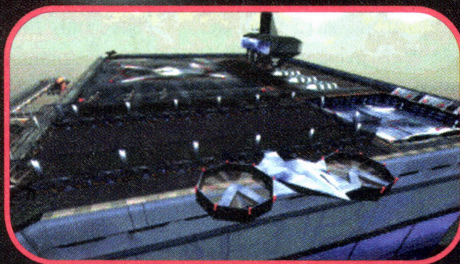
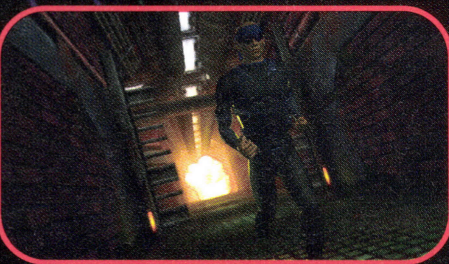
Game companies will have to be big players if they want to make it in the mass market.

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<<RESURRECTION>>



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After seeing who knows-how-many hundreds of World Wide Web sites, and reviewing scores of 'em, *PC Entertainment* ought to be able to put up a good one, don't you think?

Wirehead thinks so. For months now, we've been bringing you the best, funkiest, and most fun places on the Web as it's evolved from its text-based roots to become the entertainment and communications phenomenon of the decade. Along the way, we think we've developed a good idea of what the best Web sites offer you, the Net cruiser. Now, we've rolled that knowledge into PC Entertainment Online at <http://www.pcentertainment.com>.

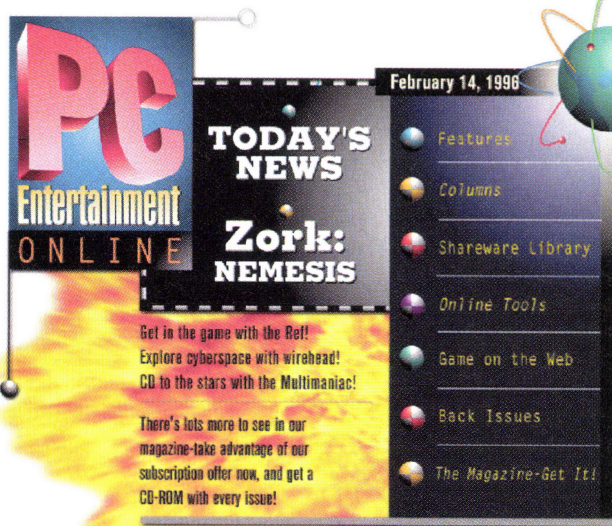
Before we started, though, we had to answer the essential question: What makes a good Web site? Well, simple question, simple answer: One that brings you timely information in a well-designed, easily findable format. It's okay to bring you the whole world at a Web site—if you can visit any part of that world within a few unhesitating clicks. It's better, though, to focus on the information visitors want,

whether they're committed action gamers, flight sim pilots, or enhanced CD junkies.

That's the aim of PC Entertainment Online. And with a Web presence, that

focus can be immediate. As companies announce hot new games or we get a sneak peek at a cutting-edge multimedia title, you'll find out what we know. We'll also link you to the sites you need to enhance your knowledge of multimedia fun: game demos, tools, tips, and tech support info from companies driving the industry.

Of course, that doesn't mean we'll ignore the stuff you already buy us for. Each month, you can look forward to our Guided Tour of a happening game, but in an expanded format, with additional images of game environments or more tips on how to solve the



A near-final prototype of what you'll find on our home page.

example, we will not only bring you the game reviews we feature in the magazine each month, but we'll also add more reviews that are exclusive to the Web site. Or we'll update a feature on hot enhanced CD titles with three more months of discs released after we ran the story, complete with links to Web sites maintained by the bands. PC Entertainment Online won't decrease the value of what you're holding now, it'll add to it.

We also believe in the basic premise of the Web—that it should always be all-inclusive. You should be able to enjoy PC Entertainment Online no matter what browser you're using. Netscape Navigator continues to be the one that pushes the Web into the multimedia era, and we're one of those sites that looks just a little better when you've got Netscape 2.0. But if you don't, not to worry. You'll still be able to enjoy PC Entertainment Online, no matter what you use. (For more on browsers, see "A Better Browser?" page 100.)

That's only the beginning. Today's Web, exciting as it is, will come to seem archaic very quickly this year as sites gain the ability to add animation, high-quality sound, and workable chat. PC Entertainment Online will grow and change as those developments become reality. We want to bring people together into an online community where they can find information they want *and* talk to others who share their interests. For now, though, we think we've added a new dimension to our coverage of interactive entertainment—one we hope you'll like. ■

Find some jammin' online stuff? Let Wirehead know at dstjohn@ftw.com or e2online@aol.com.

puzzles. (Don't worry—we'll warn you first so we don't spoil anything.) We'll also put up this column, as well as each month's offerings from my colleagues, the Ref and the Multimaniac. You'll even be able to go back into our archives to find that elusive game tip we ran way back when. And where it's called for, we'll update our past reviews and features to keep the information fresh and useful.

The key here is *more*—more of the interactive entertainment coverage you expect when you read us. On the Internet, we don't have to worry about space considerations. That means, for

A good Web site brings you timely information in a well-designed, easily findable format.

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— PC Gamer

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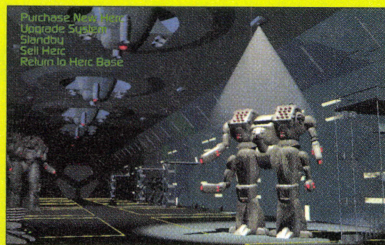
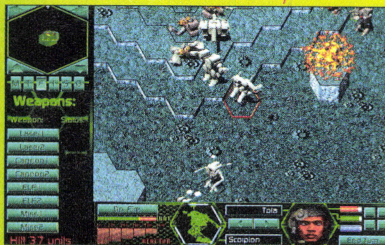
Somebody's going to get hurt
and it ain't gonna be me.

I've got you in my sights
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A puny little Cybrid sucker.

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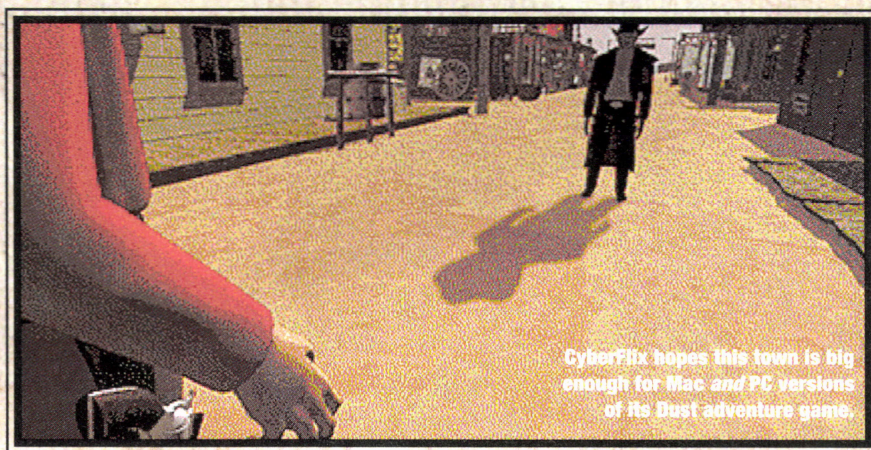
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Mac Games:

DEAD OR ALIVE?



CyberFlix hopes this town is big enough for Mac and PC versions of its *Dust* adventure game.

By Peter Olafson

PCs aren't the only way to play, so why are Mac mavens so often left out of the game?

Eric Klein was busy. On any given day, working out of his office at Apple's R&D complex in Cupertino, Calif., he'd deal with five to seven Macintosh publishers on as many as a dozen different products.

"Seventy-hour weeks were the norm," Klein recalls. "We were running six- and seven-day weeks early in 1995 in crunch season. I was continuously going up to see developers. My frequent flyer miles were far more than I've ever seen in my life."

And what was all this business about? Desktop publishing? Education? Graphics?

Nope. Games.

Whoa there. Games...and the *Macintosh*? That doesn't compute. Everybody knows the Mac is not a toy, but a *serious* computer for *serious* graphic artists and publishers.

Well, fact is, the Macintosh is finally becoming a serious player. More and more publishers are releasing Macintosh versions of their "A-list" games, and these are following harder and harder on the

heels of their PC counterparts. Klein, Apple's games "evangelist" until last November, indicates that, between 1994 and 1995, the number of Mac games released for Christmas doubled.

"The storm has started," says Klein. "Over the next six months, you're going to see a huge number of big titles from big people. It's literally the feast after the famine."

Of course, "famine" is a relative term. The Mac has always had games, some them quite celebrated. The classic action game *Crystal Quest*, for example, took root on the Mac. Likewise, Infocom's Mac-only *Quarterstaff* has achieved almost legendary status. In the strategy-game arena, developers seem to have a natural affection for the machine. (Maxis and Chris Crawford have developed many of their popular sims on the Mac.) And in the early '90s, a Mac-specific CD-ROM game market evolved significantly in advance of its IBM counterpart—a function, in some measure, of the availability of powerful Mac tools like Photoshop and Macromedia Director. Mac gamers got first crack at such top CD-ROM titles as Sanctuary Woods' *The Journeyman Project*, Reactor's *Spaceship Warlock*, and Brøderbund's *Myst*—the all-time best-selling Mac game, with more

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— Denny Atkin
Computer Gaming World

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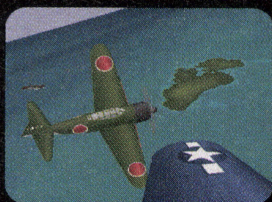
Spitfires, Mustangs, Corsairs and Zeros. There's even a rookie mode for beginners.

Can you survive seven tactical scenarios? Overcome eight bandits at once? Or outgun that second modern pilot?

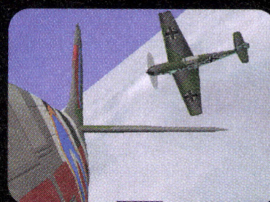
Without losing your lunch... Or your life? Fighter Duel. The way it is, is the way it was.



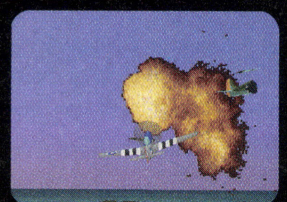
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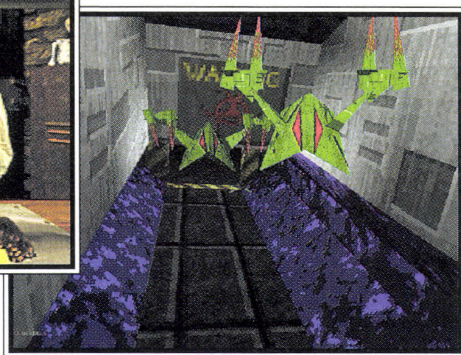
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Frankenstein came to life on the Mac before moving to the PC.



Descent and other megahits have ported to the Mac, but many action hits never will.

than 400,000 units sold to date.

This Is No Toy

Even so, the Mac never managed to capture the public imagination as a gaming platform. And today, even though estimates peg the Macintosh installed base at 20 million, with 5 to 7 million of those machines in homes, the overwhelming majority of new games are released for the PC first. Many games, especially action games, never show up on the Mac at all. And those Mac games that exist are often hard to find in retail outlets.

The reasons are legion: Programming problems put off developers in the machine's early days, forcing coders to digest an intimidating battery of programming manuals. And the early machines' black-and-white graphics, skimpy 128KB of memory, and high prices discouraged gamers. In 1987, the Mac went color with the Mac II, and earned a dominant place in the education and home markets. But in an effort to court skeptical business users, then-Apple chief John Sculley declared that the Macintosh was not a toy.

That assessment would haunt the machine for years to come. The company turned away from game developers, and neglected the fast graphics performance needed to deliver action and arcade games. Game developers got the message, and turned their attention elsewhere. So while advanced tools made the Mac the multimedia platform of choice, games became increasingly rare.

Apple Gets in the Game

Apple began to turn the corner on games in 1991 after Craig Fryar, then the company's liaison to Microsoft, suggested to his bosses that Apple was missing a key element of the consumer market. Fryar would become Apple's first game evangelist—effectively, a liaison to the game-development community on a mission to encourage publishers to con-

vert their best PC titles to the Mac and to create original Mac games.

On the performance side, the advent of PowerPC-based systems finally gave ample horsepower to drive Pentium-class games. So, despite perceptions to the contrary, today's Macs are, among other things, wonderful game machines. And even as Apple has engaged in a frenzy of cost-cutting in recent years, you can bet that the recent appearance of Macintosh clones will drive prices down even further.

In reality, the company had little choice gameswise. Struggling to make money amid the increasing market dominance of Intel-

powered PCs, and facing Microsoft's push to make Windows 95 a top-notch games platform (see "Judgment Day for Windows 95," January, page 49), Apple couldn't afford to let gamers dismiss the Macintosh.

Finally, Apple seems to realize that games help drive the market for personal computers, and that, while the Macintosh may not be a toy, people do want to play games on it. To help satisfy that desire, Apple now holds regular conferences and workshops for game developers and has invested heavily in games-related marketing. In late 1995, the company released a game software developer's kit designed to smooth the path of programmers working with things like 3-D graphics, 2-D graphics acceleration, joystick input, and networking.

Moreover, several recent developments in general Mac technology have promising gaming applications: QuickTime VR (unveiled in the Star Trek: The Next Generation Interactive Technical Manual); QuickDraw 3D (used to drive Reality Bytes'

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gearheads
a furious war of wind-up toys



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A two thousand year old mystery
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THE RIDDLE OF MASTER LU

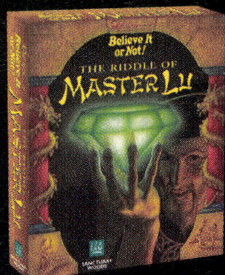
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"...one of those seemingly rare adventure games that manages
to merge both graphics and story..." — Strategy Plus

"Exotic locales, cliff-hanging situations, fast-paced story-
telling, fascinating characters, diabolical puzzles. The Riddle
of Master Lu seems to have it all." — PC Gamer



Do you share your father's interest in the Orient?
I'm tackling this last quest of your father's on my own.
What do you know of the current political situation in the Far East?
Would you be willing to part with that unusual zebra skin?



**SANCTUARY
WOODS**

Havoc, a 3-D shoot-'em-up that also runs under Windows 95); the QuickDraw 3D accelerator card; and OpenDoc (a system for easily moving components from one program to another). Those advances join the Mac's other advantages: It's a stable, unitary platform in the face of a stormy sea of mix-and-match PC clones, with an easy-to-use interface, standard high-res graphics, good-quality sound, and networking capabilities. The Mac has always been plug-and-play. Ba-da-bing, ba-da-boom: Put in the game and it runs. To wit, LucasArts reports that for an equivalent number of units sold, it receives a single Macintosh-related customer-support call for every ten PC calls.

The Mac Bounces Back

The result of all these trends? Even as Apple wrestles with its corporate future, Mac gamers are enjoying the best of times—with more games to choose from than ever before (see sidebar). And people are buying them. Figures from the Software Publishers Association show that, while overall Mac software sales for the first three quarters of 1995 dipped 12.9 percent from the same period in 1994, sales of Mac entertainment software rose 47.9 percent to \$59.1 million—the largest percentage increase in any category. Yves Martin, Apple's home-entertainment solutions manager, indicates that figures it has received from PC Data show an even more significant increase: 125 percent. Two years ago, a hit Mac game sold about 50,000 units. Now, it takes 100,000 units or more to qualify as a hit.

Still, the PC crowd has nothing to fear. In the third quarter of 1995, the Mac garnered only a little more than 13 percent of game revenue, according to the SPA. And sales of DOS-based entertainment software grew 72.7 percent to \$97 million in the first nine months of 1995, while sales of Windows games jumped 79.4 percent to \$99 million. A hit PC game, for example, sells about 250,000 units.

Given the continuing imbalance in market share, the best news for Mac gamers may be the trend toward cross-platform titles. This year, expect to see more and more games that will run under Windows 95 and the Macintosh. Brøderbund, for instance, says that 80 percent of its prod-

HOT Mac Games

- **A-10 Attack!**; Parsoft; 800-255-6227; \$48
- **Absolute Zero**; Domark; 800-695-4263; \$49.95
- **Allied General**; Mindscape; 800-234-3088; \$50
- **Alone in the Dark 3**; I-Motion; 800-443-3386; \$54.95
- **Curse of Dragon**; Domark; 800-695-4263; \$49.95
- **Dark Forces**; LucasArts; 800-985-8227; \$54.95
- **Descent**; MacPlay; 800-462-2752; \$49.95
- **Descent II**; MacPlay; 800-462-2752; not yet priced
- **Doom II**; GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; \$40–\$50
- **Dungeon Master II**; MacPlay; 800-462-2752; \$39.95
- **Dust**; CyberFlix; 800-483-8632; \$49.95
- **Entomorph**; Mindscape; 800-234-3088; \$40
- **F/A-18 Hornet**; Graphic Simulations; 800-580-4723; \$45
- **Frankenstein**; MacPlay; 800-969-4263; \$50
- **Full Throttle**; LucasArts; 800-985-8227; \$49.95
- **Indy Car II**; Virgin; 800-874-4607; \$50–\$70
- **International Tennis Open**; I-Motion; 800-443-3386; \$49–\$54
- **Journeyman Project 2**; Sanctuary Woods; 800-762-6284; \$64.95
- **Marathon 2**; Bungie; 800-332-4300; \$50
- **PGA Tour Golf III**; Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; \$49.95
- **Rebel Assault II**; LucasArts; 800-985-8227; \$54.95
- **Sam & Max Hit the Road**; LucasArts; 800-985-8227; \$29.95
- **SimCity 2000 CD**; Maxis; 800-336-2947; \$59.95
- **Star Fleet Academy**; MacPlay; 800-462-2752; not yet priced
- **Star Trek: Judgment Rites**; MacPlay; 800-462-2752; \$39.95
- **System Shock**; Origin; 800-245-4525; \$50–\$60
- **The Dig**; LucasArts; 800-985-8227; \$54.95
- **Ultimate Doom**; GT Interactive; 800-332-4300; \$30
- **Virtual Pool**; MacPlay; 800-953-7669; \$45
- **Warcraft**; Blizzard; 800-985-8227; not yet priced
- **Welcome to the Future**; Bluesky; 310-306-0683; \$45–\$55
- **Wing Commander III**; 800-245-4525; \$55–\$65
- **Wing Commander IV**; Origin; 800-245-4525; \$55–\$65
- **X-Wing**; LucasArts; 800-985-8227; \$59.95
- **You Don't Know Jack**; Berkeley Systems; 800-344-5541; \$30

Advertisement

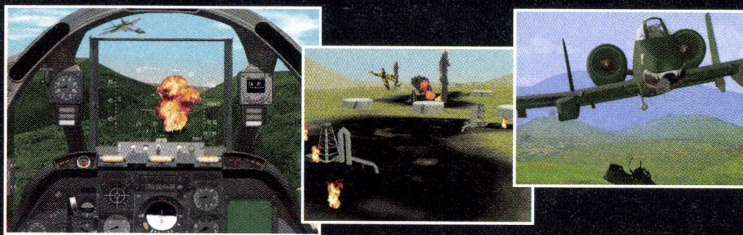
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gearheads
a furious war of wind-up toys

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A - 10 TANK KILLER II



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when he strayed too close to the
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And, **MAN**, he blowed up **GOOD**.



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KIDS TO ADULTS



ucts will run on both platforms.

Mac-specific developers are excited, too. Bungie Software—publisher of Pathways into Darkness and the two Marathon 3-D action games—has expanded, hiring Apple's Klein to seek out new Mac games and license Marathon technology to other developers.



LucasArts will follow Mac versions of Rebel Assault II and Dark Forces with X-Wing and The Dig.

"We're expanding because we're able to, and we're able to because the Marathons have been such a huge success," declares Doug Zartman, Bungie's director of public relations. "We've heard from a lot of people that they can almost attribute a certain number of Power Mac sales directly to Marathon."

And the oft-heard stereotype of Mac owners as non-gamers? Klein says it's just not true. "Today's Mac consumers look a lot like their DOS counterparts," he says. "The absolute last reason they bought a computer is to play games, and the No. 1 reason they use it is to play games. In fact, they play network games as much as, and possibly more than, their DOS counterparts."

Macs Still Lack

Of course, the Mac gaming picture is not entirely rosy. Some areas—including sports games—remain underserved. Where is the great Mac baseball game, for example? Or even a decent Mac baseball game? While the Mac is rich in ports from the PC, many look more like DOS titles than true Mac games—something Mac owners are very fussy about. And many game developers are not convinced.

"We're doing some Mac product, but it's not the focus of our PC development," explains Pat Becker, director of corporate communications for Electronic Arts. "From a performance standpoint, [the Mac] hasn't been following the state of technology as fast as what's going on in the PC end of the

business, with Windows 95 and some of the tools that are available."

And retail space for Macintosh games remains limited. It's no surprise, then, that a significant portion of Mac games—as many as half by some estimates—are sold via mail-order. "It's very tough to break into [retail]," complains Bungie's Zartman. "Once you have a breakthrough product—like we had with Pathways—that gets you noticed. Then it's a little easier."

Once again, Apple's trying to help, spending millions on a "shelf-space initiative" to battle the perception that there's not much Mac software. It's too early to assess how well the program is working.

So though Mac gaming still faces daunting problems and challenges, things are definitely looking up. PCs may always rule the roost, but at least now the Macintosh is in the game. Keep watching for more developments.

Mac Games:

DEAD
OR ALIVE?

PC in Your Mac?

Power Mac owners can also get in the game two other ways: Apple's DOS Compatibility Card and Insignia Solutions' SoftWindows emulation software. Both choices are pricey and were intended to run business apps on your Mac, not games or multimedia titles.

The DOS Compatibility Card is the equivalent of having a 486 PC inside your Mac. It's currently available only for the 6100 series of Power Macs, but Apple recently showed a technology demo of a PCI Pentium-based card that will work with newer models. The card costs \$699 or more depending upon how much memory you want to add—and you will need quite a bit if you plan to run RAM-hungry PC games. It supports Sound Blaster, so it should work with most DOS titles.

The same can't be said for the \$299 SoftWindows, which supports only Windows sound. The software works with all Power Macs, though, provided they have enough memory—at least 12MB or more.

—Christine Grech

Advertisement

DISASTEROID: Loves to kick asteroid.



Whenever Gearheads battle, Disasteroid is always laser hot. So, if you need someone to hack holes in your opponent's defenses, Disasteroid's the guy.

OFFICIAL PLAYER'S GUIDE



Saving the Earth Is Just the Beginning...

Join Commander Boston Low and the crew of the *Atlantis* as they rush to derail an asteroid that's on a collision course with Earth. If you succeed in your mission, you'll want to investigate those strange readouts coming from the asteroid's interior. But be careful — solve the alien puzzle and you'll be thrown light-years through space onto the surface of what looks like a deserted planet.



Before you can make it back home, you must unlock the mysteries of this distant world: What are those ghostly visitations? How can you travel from spire to spire? And why is geologist Ludger Brink beginning to behave...unusually?

The Dig Official Player's Guide, written in cooperation with LucasArts Entertainment Company, holds the key to all the riddles you'll encounter in this challenging and beautifully rendered graphic adventure.

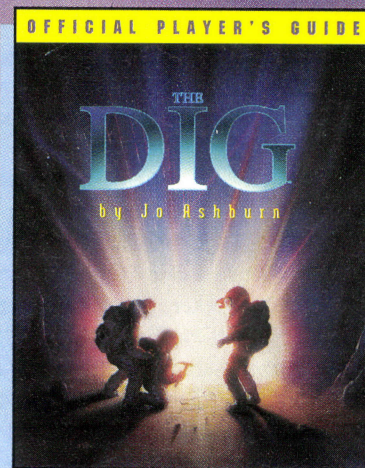


Inside you'll find:

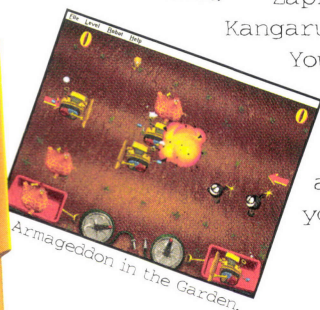
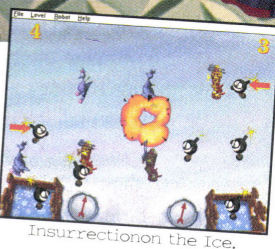
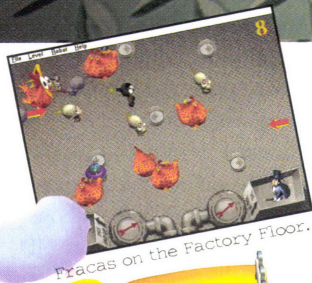
- A comprehensive walk-through of the game, complete with all puzzle solutions.
- Indispensable maps covering *The Dig's* rooms, caves, spires, and waterfalls.
- Tiered hints that take you from Earth to deep space and back again.
- Tons of original sketches and paintings from the game's artists.
- A revealing look behind the scenes at the LucasArts wizards who brought *The Dig* to life.



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gearheads

a furious war of wind-up toys



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CD-ROMs GO ONLINE

By David Gerding

CD-ROMs have a problem. Despite their high-tech video and audio, slick graphics, and vast storage capacity, by the time many multimedia discs reach your local retailer's shelves, they're already yesterday's news.

The online world has a problem, too. Although the Internet and online services can deliver nearly instantaneous updates, slow access speeds make it hard to deliver multimedia sizzle over the phone lines.

Wouldn't it be cool if you could combine the rich audio and video of CD-ROMs with the timeliness of online access? Well, we weren't the first to come up with this idea. A growing number of new CD-ROMs integrate links to online services and the Internet right from the disc.

The trend isn't exactly brand-new. Back in 1994, CNN Interactive and Turner Home Entertainment released *The People vs. O.J. Simpson*, a disc containing a CompuServe connection so users could join O.J. chat forums. Voyager's acclaimed *Puppet Motel*, Laurie Anderson's performance art disc, has a "green room" that connects you to the company's Web site, where you can download more cool videos to view from within the disc. And now-defunct Medio Interactive had grand plans to integrate online links into every one of its titles, and even had trials underway in Seattle before the company's money ran out.

Note: We rated only the online portion of each title, not the title as a whole. Zero stars means the online portion is useless dreck. Five stars denotes compelling online features.

But new online discs are taking the concept further than ever before. In some cases, disc publishers set up a site on the Internet or a commercial online service. To get the new info, you simply browse the site. If you want to store the updated info, you must capture it the same way you would other online data—by copying text to the Windows clipboard or downloading a graphic file, for example.

In a more appealing approach, the publisher instead puts up "data sets" that you download directly onto your system. Your disc automatically integrates the new data with the info burned into the CD-ROM. "Bit-fat" content such as video and animation comes on the CD, while text-heavy online updates download quickly and don't take up much space on your hard drive. When it's done right, you can't tell what's coming from where.

There's more good news. These hybrid discs typically cost less than CD-ROMs without online links—sometimes as little as \$20 each. The reason? Publishers hope that online extensions will keep you a loyal customer: if you stay involved with the disc, you're more likely to buy upgrades. And in some cases, publishers can charge for the online updates, or rake in connect-time fees from your online service.

The downside? Some publishers use online enhancements merely as marketing ploys, rather than to add real value (see "Zero-Star Selections," page 37). Also, don't confuse these discs with the CD-ROMs put out by online services like CompuServe, which are essentially multimedia magazines designed to entice you onto a particular service.

To give you an idea of what's out there, we checked out nine new titles with online links. Even more are on

A new breed of interactive entertainment mixes digital media to deliver up-to-the-minute sizzle.

the way: Look for online links in Discovery Channel Multimedia's new World-wide Beer Hunter disc, and on upcoming enhanced music CDs from Sony that will let you link to Sony's Web site for even more info on the artists. Mindscape is also working on online access for a whole new line of titles.

Multimedia Encyclopedias

As the mother of all multimedia references, CD-ROM encyclopedias are a natural for online extensions. Not surprisingly, all three top interactive encyclopedia makers are busy adding online enhancements.

Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia 1996

Rating: ★★ ★

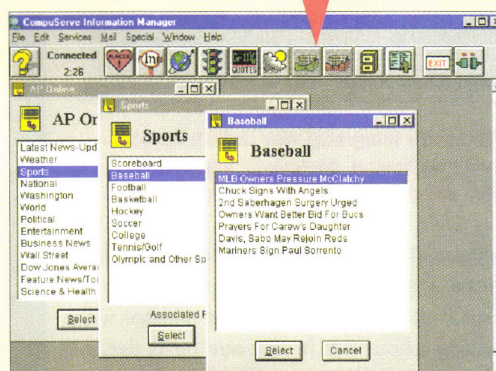
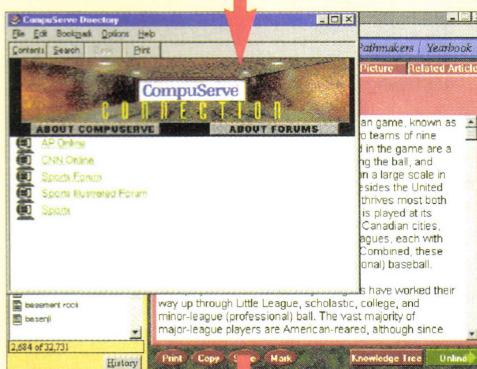
Compton's calls itself the encyclopedia for the whole family, so it's no surprise that its online effort, an America Online forum, also tries to offer something for everyone.

When you click on the encyclopedia's Online button, it launches America Online and drops you into the Compton's area. You have to be a subscriber to America Online to use the online extensions, so naturally the Compton's disc includes an AOL start-up kit with five free hours of connect time.

The main feature of the Compton's forum is the "Living Encyclopedia," essentially an online version of the CD continuously updated with new articles. Unfortunately, the Living Encyclopedia's multimedia content is limited to black-and-white pictures. And the most timely update article we found was almost six months old. Other areas in Compton's AOL forum include monthly articles on topics like science and nature, plus an educational area for teachers. There's even a

Grolier's thousands of generic CompuServe links don't make it easy to find related info.

chat room for fellow Compton's Encyclopedia users. Weird. (Compton's NewMedia; 800-862-2206; Win CD, \$49.95; updates incur AOL connect fees)



Microsoft Encarta '96

Rating: ★★ ★★ ★★ ★

Microsoft's flagship encyclopedia keeps getting bigger—and better.

The company has achieved an exciting integration of disc-based content and online updates. With Encarta '96, you get 12 free monthly online updates to the program's Yearbook feature. Each month's update file covers news and events from the previous month, with about 40 to 50 new articles, some with graphics, charts, or maps. To get the

updates, you can log on to Microsoft's Web site or use the Microsoft Network and download the file to your hard drive. The updates take up some 600KB each, so it takes about 10 minutes to download the file with a 28.8Kbps modem.

After you download the file, Encarta integrates the new data into its search engine and marks encyclopedia articles containing new information with an update icon. After such an update, for example, a search of "Bosnia" yields a Yearbook reference to an article covering the recent Paris/Dayton peace treaty. Very cool. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win CD, Mac CD; \$49; updates are free for the first 12 months)

1996 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia

Rating: ★★

Grolier's encyclopedia is notable for its uncluttered user interface, so it's ironic that the company's online efforts aren't so streamlined.

The online component here is an unusual and often poorly executed implementation of hyperlinks from articles to allegedly "related" areas on CompuServe. Some 12,000 articles have such links. Unfortunately, in many cases

they seem a bit of a stretch or overly general, such as the baseball article suggesting CompuServe's AP wire service. There really isn't anything dynamic to these linkages, as Grolier provides no way to update them as the content on CompuServe changes. Anyone with a CompuServe account could probably make the same, if not better, associations using the service's own built-in search engine. If you don't have a CompuServe account, the disc supplies a start-up kit and ten free hours. (Grolier Electronic Publishing; 800-285-4534; Win CD, Mac CD; \$49.95; updates incur CompuServe connect fees)

Music & Movies

With so many movies and so much music out there, who could possibly keep up to date? You can, with online updates.

Microsoft Music Central

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Hard-core music fans will certainly dig Music Central, which combines an astounding 60,000 album references with biographies, song clips, and even video clips. As with its other reference titles, Microsoft lets you add monthly update files to this product's database.

Music Central's updates work just like Encarta's and Cinemania's, but the numerically broader coverage here is somehow less compelling. For example, Music Central's December 1995 update alone includes information on more than 280 new albums. Yet, though the downloads include recent musical arrivals, they often provide only credits and a songlist, not full reviews.

Another online bonus: You can order most of the listed albums online with a point and click of your mouse, though prices are merely comparable to retail. Of course, the store is always open. (Microsoft; 800-426-9400; Win 95 CD, Mac CD; \$39.95; updates are free for the first 12 months)

Microsoft Cinemania '96

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Microsoft's latest edition of its movie reference is the best yet, with more than

24,000 movie listings and biographies. But if you want more, go online.

Cinemania reprises the monthly update approach used in Encarta. Here, though, the

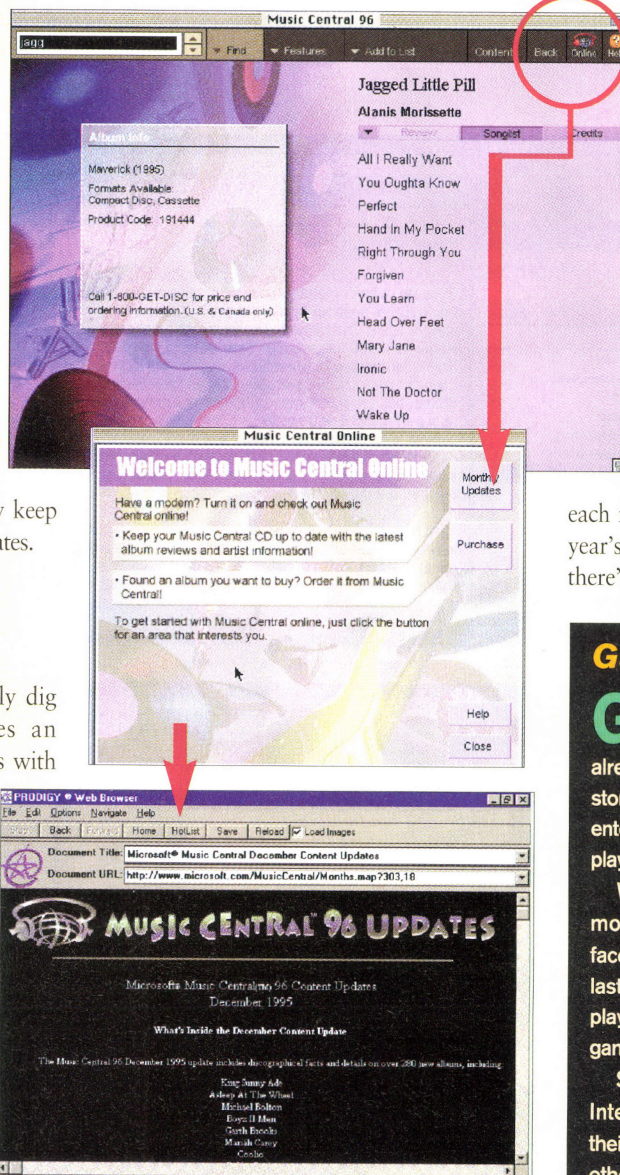
426-9400; Win 95 CD/Mac CD; \$29.95; updates are free for the first 12 months)

Blockbuster Video Guide to Movies & Videos

Rating: ★ ★

While not as polished or comprehensive as Microsoft's Cinemania, the Blockbuster Movie Guide from Creative Multimedia still packs plenty of reviews to help you select a video rental—and it, too, stays current.

Each month, Creative offers an update file with about 20 new movie reviews. Once you download the files, the program integrates them seamlessly into the disc's database of reviews. But you'll have to pay. You can either shell out \$3 for each month's update or cough up \$30 for a year's subscription. That's a lot considering there's no trial offer and the reviews them-



Microsoft's integrated Web or MSN updates for Music Central, Cinemania, and Encarta keep you current without wasting your time.

updates are mostly text sprinkled with a few movie stills, so they take up only about 350KB each. An entire year of updates will occupy about 4MB on your hard drive. More importantly, the updates are *very* current, with what seems like a four-week lag from the time a movie premieres until it appears online. But while the CD-ROM features reviews by such big names as Kael, Maltin, and Ebert, the online updates only offer about 15 to 20 new movie reviews from Microsoft staffers. (Microsoft; 800-

Games Go Online, Too

Game makers are also getting into the online act. A few pioneering games already include Internet links that enable storylines to follow real-life events, let you enter contests, or let you compete against players from all over the world.

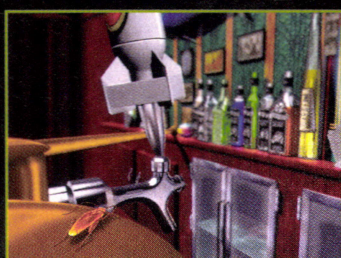
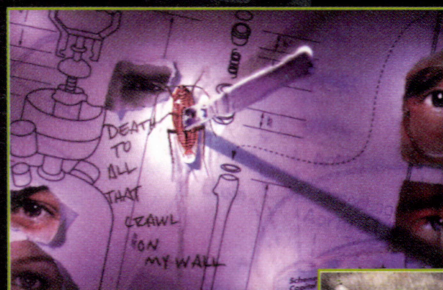
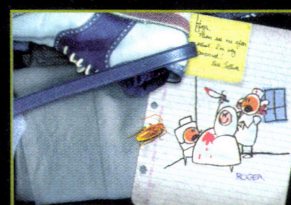
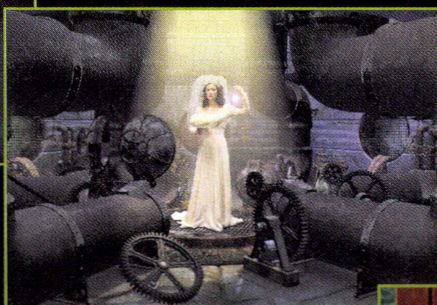
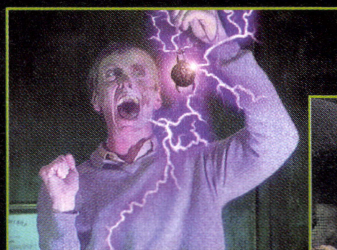
Westwood Studios, for instance, did more than give Monopoly a high-tech facelift when it computerized the classic last fall. An Internet link allows up to six players—anywhere in the world—to play a game together.

Similarly, I-Motion's CEO includes an Internet link that lets players compare their corporate managerial talents against other CEO wannabes. It also lets participants compete for a \$5,000 cash prize and a trip to Paris.

Meanwhile, Activision is looking at the Internet as a means to enhance the plot of its upcoming espionage thriller, *Spycraft: The Great Game*. Via the Net, players will be able to download video "news" clips based on real-world events. Activision hopes this will keep the game's plot-based on this year's Russian elections—from getting stale. Originally, the company even planned to include an online character in *Spycraft*, but the idea has been put on hold—perhaps for the game's sequel.

—Steve Klett

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Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

By Bill Meyer

Unlike books and movies—where sequels are often mere shadows of the originals—computer games tend to get better the second time around, thanks to rapidly advancing technology. That's certainly the case with Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness.

Incredible attention to detail provides the cornerstone of Warcraft II. First-rate artwork and an array of ingenious buildings and ground, air, and naval units impress at every turn. This time, the game renders the mayhem in exquisite, colorful Super VGA graphics accompanied by outstanding sound effects. Every one of the nine building types on both the Human and Orc sides, from the Gryphon Aviaries to the Orc Ogre Mounds, appears as an intricate work of art. Each unit and building type responds to a mouse click with a trademark voice or sound effect, such as the Human Church's version of the chanting or Orc Grunt's grumbled "Zug Zug."

Seven nations make up the Human faction, while the Orcs bring seven clans to the battlefield. Each nation or clan—from the traitorous Human nation of Alterac to the savage Orcish Bleeding Hollow Clan—plays its own unique role in the game. And each has individual leaders, histories, and temperaments that actually come to bear during game play. For instance, during one Orc Campaign, you portray the Dragonmaw Clan, which, according to Orcish history, once captured the Dragon Queen Alexstraza. Fittingly, this scenario first presents access to deadly fire-breathing dragons. In fact, all high-level construction options (from Mage Towers to Temples of the Damned) come as part of Warcraft's elaborately scripted universe.

Players can upgrade armor and firepower for ground and naval units as often as three times, dramatically increasing offensive and defensive might. In addition, constructing the correct buildings lets you elevate the rank and power of existing ground units. For example, build an Elven lumber mill to upgrade archers to Elven Rangers with longbows, precision accuracy, and improved sight.

Players can upgrade armor and firepower for ground and naval units as often as three times, dramatically increasing offensive and defensive might. In addition, constructing the correct buildings lets you elevate the rank and power of existing ground units. For example, build an Elven lumber mill to upgrade archers to Elven Rangers with longbows, precision accuracy, and improved sight.

Dwarven Demo squads aren't too tough, but they pack a mean punch.

Sea and air combat add to Warcraft's mayhem factor.

In all, each side has access to nine ground units, two air allies—Dwarf Gryphon Riders and Goblin Zeppelins, for instance—and five sea-going craft, including submarines.

Amazingly, despite all the detail and new additions on both sides, the game never becomes confusing—just deeper and more interesting. Winning battles still depends on shrewd strategies such as cutting off gold supplies, killing workers, destroying barracks, or blockading timber routes with Ogre Juggernauts or Human Battleships. But unique missions like freeing prisoners and destroying oil platforms force you to constantly formulate new approaches.

And while Warcraft veterans may breeze through the first few missions, later challenges can take hours to complete. Even head-to-head contests (in which as many as eight players can compete over a network, or a pair via modem or null-modem cable) can occupy an entire evening.

Only one problem still exists: Your units can be stupid and difficult to control. The game designers neglected to tell the Orc Peons and Human Peasants not to walk past a cannon tower just to chop a piece of wood.

But don't let that stop you. We don't have enough space in one review to cover all the good things about Warcraft II. Buy it; you'll like it.

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Blizzard Entertainment
800-953-7669

Platform: DOS CD

Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM,
DOS 5.0, Super VGA, Sound Blaster-
compatible, double-speed
CD-ROM drive, mouse
Street Price: \$50



GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

VALUE: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The best strategy game—and one of the best games—around. Period.

TIPS



• Read the manual thoroughly to understand different units' building dependencies. Without

that info, you'll never get the more powerful units. • If you find a mine, set up shop next to it with a Town Hall and Barracks. While your enemy is still slogging across the map, cash will be growing in your Keep.

• Attack with a mix of units rather than one type: Ogres and Axe Throwers, Footmen and Archers, for instance. • Upgrade your buildings before you upgrade weapons. Doing so will allow you to access further construction options for more units and weapons. • Do not go in the front door. Cannons and ground units covered by the Fog of War will cut you down. Instead, destroy walls from the back or side. Then, creep in with an Orc Catapult or Human Ballista surrounded by troops. • If an enemy encampment is surrounded by thick forest, grab some Peons and cut your way in.

• In naval missions with enemy coastlines heavily fortified by cannon towers, land troop transports on enemy shores out of harm's way. Inch your way in and take out the cannons, but keep the ground troops close to stop marauding enemy units.

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- By far, the largest, most detailed foes ever seen in a fighting game. Up to 3/4 of the screen's height.
- Innovative screen panning, zooming, real-time scaling, shadows, and special F/X.
- Interactive, animated, and detailed backgrounds that often hide special dangers.
- 8 characters, 2 champions and a nasty surprise.
- Special moves, combos, resurrections, & humiliations.
- Blood sucking, claw slashing, tail whipping, karate kicking, fist ramming, body slamming, blood spurting action — need we say more?



XENOPHAGE

ALIEN BLOODSPORT

FormGen
INCORPORATED

Developed by Argo Games
Published by Apogee Software, Ltd.
Distributed by FormGen



Software Creations Web BBS (<http://www.swcbbs.com>)
WWW Site (<http://www.apogee1.com>)
CIS (Go APOGEE) AOL (Keyword APOGEE)



Ice & Fire

Ice & Fire might be more appropriately titled Flash & Fizzle. The game has an intriguing name and starts out with some impressive full-motion video, but it's all downhill after that.

The video sets the scene: a space station on an asteroid has been attacked by alien "Spheroids." To survive, the humans in the station have sent friend and foe alike into a deep freeze by turning down the heat. Your job is to thaw all the humans and figure out how to defeat the Spheroids.



During flying sequences, your options are limited to hitting the fire button.



Ice & Fire may contain some good elements, but overall, it's a disappointment.

Ice & Fire

GT Interactive

800-610-4843

Developer: Zombie Interactive

Platform: DOS CD

Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, Win 3.1, double speed CD-ROM drive

Street Price: \$49.95



GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★

Most of the action takes place in mazes littered with blocks of ice that may contain humans, Spheroids, or equipment you can use to help complete your mission. You cruise the maze using a fire gun to melt ice blocks and an ice gun to refreeze any Spheroids you unintentionally release.

Alas, despite the

exciting introductory videos, Ice & Fire's game action quickly becomes tedious and dull. The Doom-like mazes lack the fast-paced action and exciting effects of id Software's classics.

You move from one maze level to another by flying a cruiser on the outside of the asteroid, fighting with enemy craft all the way. Unfortunately, not only can you not control the flying action between levels—your ship is stuck on a track—you can't even aim your guns. You simply react to any enemies by slapping the fire button.

Ice & Fire offers an object lesson for game programmers: The people at Zombie Interactive have proved that you can't simply sandwich a dull maze game between thin layers of neat video effects and expect to have a winner. After a few minutes of tedious action, many players will be tempted to start rooting for the Spheroids.

—Sam and Patrick Marshall

Earthworm Jim

Even a lowly worm can have his day. In Activision's Earthworm Jim, fate comes falling out of the sky in the form of a superpowered suit from the stars that lets him stand and fight.

Boot up this faithful Windows 95 port of the popular Sega Genesis/Super Nintendo side-scrolling platform game and play Jim as he rejoices in his new-found mobility.

In your search for Princess-What's-Her-Name, you'll journey through 20 levels of wildly different environments. Though game-play depth isn't often associated with 2-D games these days, it certainly applies here. In the course of Jim's travels, players get to

bungee-jump, pilot an undersea pod, race the villainous Psy-Crow through an asteroid field, and explore the pulsing intestines of...something.

The game's detailed animation will remind you of Saturday morning cartoons. And the soundtrack complements the goofy graphics with manic shifts from '50s sci-fi to easy listening to New Wave.

Gamers with an itch to exercise their reflexes will enjoy some of the challenges. Jim's basic moves are simple enough—whip, jump, fire various projectiles from his blaster—but finding the right combination to advance to the next stage can take some fairly repetitive investigation. Stick around, though, and the humorous graphics and breakneck action will eventually win you over.

—Corey Cohen

Earthworm Jim

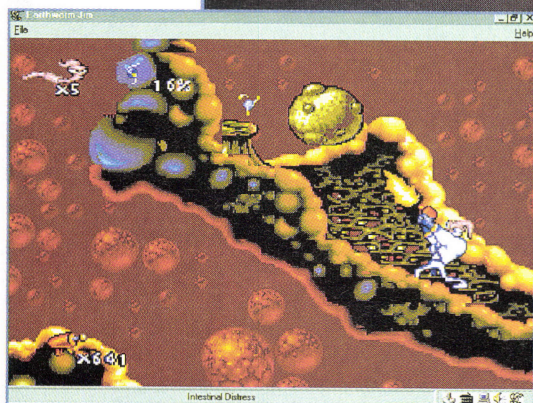
Activision

800-477-3650

Platform: Win 95 CD

Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive

List Price: \$49.95



You just dodged lunch. Are you dinner?

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2



After you crash

we simply hose the

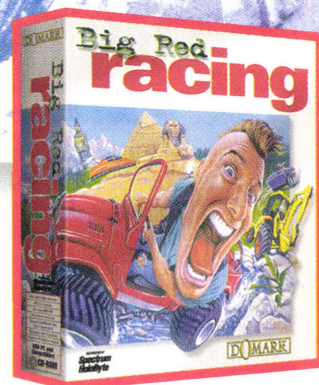
pulpy red mess off the dash

and give the car

to the next guy.

Introducing Big Red Racing—a full out, kidney crunching, pedal to the metal, get massive air kind of game. It's a world-wide off-road thrash fest where pot holes resemble swimming pools and speed bumps are 200' shear rock cliffs...the rules of the road do not apply. To order call 1-800-695-GAME.

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BrainDead 13

What do you get when you mix two parts *Scooby Doo* with one part *Heavy Metal* and toss it in a Dragon's Lair crust? Why, BrainDead 13, of course.

The latest in ReadySoft's cartoon-cum-computer game line (e.g., Space Ace), BrainDead 13 casts you as Lance, "the world's hippest computer repair guru," pitted against the diabolical Dr. Neuro Neurosis, a disembodied brain bent on world domination.

You run Lance through dozens of hand-drawn back-grounds, attempting to keep one step ahead of the bad doctor's various minions, such as Vivi, a hairdressing vampire; Moose, the dimwitted, undead jock; and the omnipresent Fritz, your enemy's hook-handed henchman.

The terrific animation, soundtrack, and sound effects will bring back fond memories of Scooby and Shaggy flee-

ing madly through the corridors of some spooky mansion. BrainDead 13 turns up the gore factor a bit, though:

While the Scoob never got anything worse than a good scare, Lance is likely to be decapitated, crushed, or burned to a crisp. Fortunately, he just keeps coming back for more—right at the spot of your last mistake.

As in the other ReadySoft games, however, you'd best be prepared to make *lots* of mistakes. You can only move Lance in the four cardinal directions or hit the space bar to perform an "action," like jumping or swinging a weapon. Timing is key, and you'll find yourself dying again and again as you search for the right combination to get you through a monster-filled room. Logic doesn't play much of a role, either, so you may end up hitting keys randomly until you find the proper order.

As a result, while BrainDead 13 is slicker than snot (one of Fritz's favorite feasts), it can be frustrating to play. Still, if you have the patience, it can make for a gory good time.

—Christopher Lindquist



BrainDead 13's animations rival Saturday morning cartoons for frenetic action.

BrainDead 13

ReadySoft
905-475-4801



Platform: DOS/Win 95 CD, Mac CD
Requires: PC: 386, 4MB RAM, VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive; Mac: 4MB RAM, 256-color video, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: \$49.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

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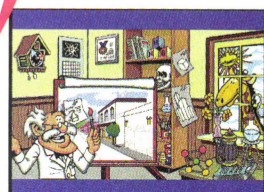
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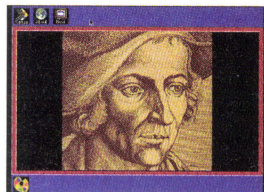


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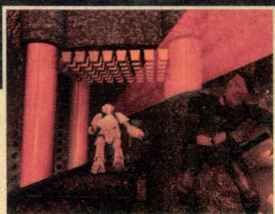


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The Terminator: Future Shock

By Steve Klett

Without a doubt, *The Terminator* has earned its place in the sci-fi movie hall of fame. Unfortunately, Bethesda Softworks' computer games based on the fast-action flick, *Terminator: Rampage* and *Terminator 2029*, have hardly been classics—until now. With *The Terminator: Future Shock*, Bethesda finally provides an experience that almost



Keep an eye on those cool lighting effects.

BEGIN BRIEFING TACTICAL STATISTICS



Between-mission briefings aren't much to look at.

meets the lofty expectations forged by the original film.

The game brings you to Los Angeles in the year 2015. The city has been destroyed by nuclear war, and mankind has been pushed to the brink of extinction by a sentient computer called SkyNet and its army of robotic war machines. Only a small faction of rebels led by the infamous John Connor stands in SkyNet's way. Your job?

Escape from a death camp, find your way to the rebel headquarters, and help Connor turn the tide of the war.



Another one bites the dust.

Not to worry. Along the way you'll gather a comforting array of 17 impressive weapons, including laser pistols, an M-16 rifle, and the ubiquitous Doom-style shotgun. And health, weapon, and ammo powerups are scattered everywhere.

The control system, which uses the keyboard to direct your forward and backward movement and the mouse to steer your aim and turn you a full 360 degrees, seems awkward at first but becomes second nature after a few missions.

Future Shock's in-game graphics, while not extraordinary, successfully capture the look and feel of the futuristic L.A. depicted in the *Terminator* movies. (The between-mission briefing sequences, however, harken back to an older, less graphically interesting time.) Excellent lighting effects, such as T-600 faces lighting up when they fire at you, add to the fun. And the opening music, taken right from *Terminator 2*, will get your blood pumping.

As with most games based on brand-new engines, however, Future Shock falls short of perfection. Enemies sometimes fire and walk through walls and floors, and you might get stuck in midair when you jump and don't quite hit your mark. Don't look for network play, either, though Bethesda says it expects to release an add-on multiplayer module this spring.

Despite its shakedown troubles, Future Shock's varied game play and apt portrayal of *The Terminator* atmosphere make it a worthwhile purchase for action/adventure fans. Hasta la vista, baby.

The Terminator: Future Shock

Bethesda Softworks
800-677-0700

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/50, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: \$49.95

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

VALUE: ★ ★ ★ ★

Future Shock rises above the hordes of Doom clones to provide an exhilarating and varied gaming experience.

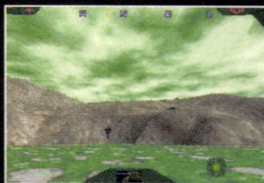
TIPS



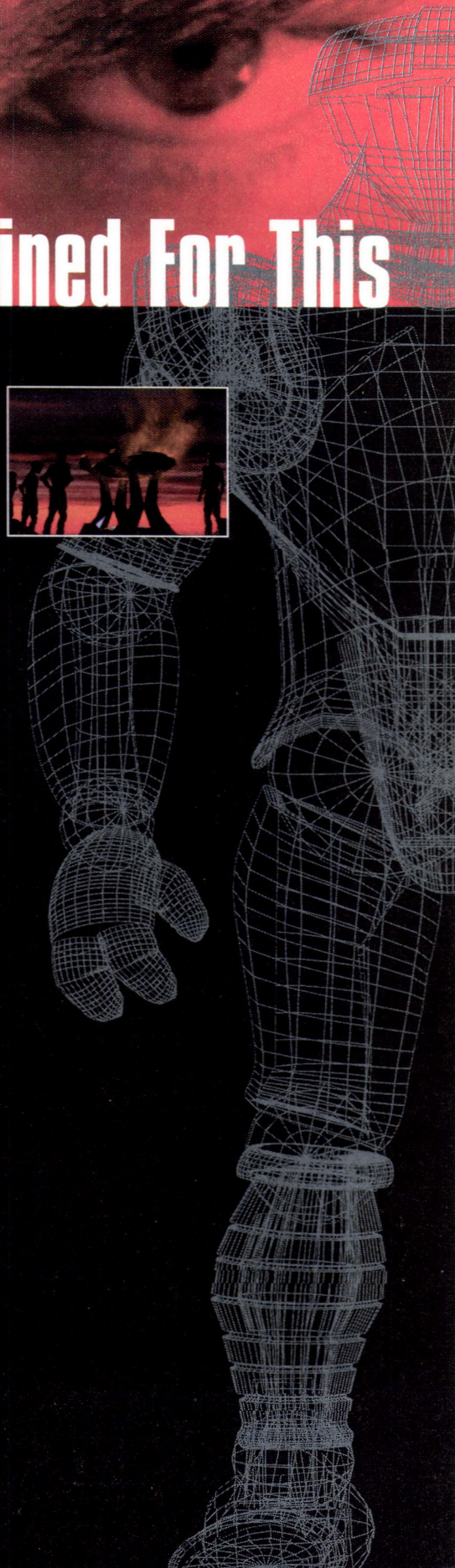
• The shotgun is probably the best weapon in the game. It's most effective at close range.

• Don't give in to the temptation to explore non-critical buildings in search of powerups unless you really need them. You may come out in worse shape than when you went in. • Don't close with Terminator robots! Hit and run. Try grenade and rocket launchers. • Don't look inside a building for the way into the prison complex in Mission Three.

You've Trained For This



A New World...



Psychic Detective

By Fredric Paul



You play Eric Fox, psychic detective—though sometimes it feels like you're a psychedelic detective.



How you play *Black Diamond* determines your fate.

Puka Lounge when Laina Pozok shows up. She's Russian, beautiful, and way out of your league. Laina shows you how to project yourself into the heads of anyone you come in contact with and takes you to a fam-

ily gathering to learn more about her father's recent suicide.

And that's how you play the game: jumping from character to character as their icons appear on the screen, and watching the video shift to depict your new point of view. You can also touch objects for a quick psychic blast, or occasionally choose between different actions, such as following Laina's innocent sister Erica. Once in a while, you'll get the chance to plant a psychic suggestion in someone's head, such as urging Laina to act nice or nasty.

Plot developments uncover secret Soviet psychic experiments and objects known as psychic collectors, which can boost your powers. Exactly what happens depends on the choices you make, but all the threads culminate in a mysterious board game called *Black Diamond*. Here you match psychic powers with the evil Max Mirage, playing on each other's hidden fears and neuroses to reach one of 14 possible conclusions. If you've played your cards right, you'll have a better chance of defeating Max and saving your sanity.

The writing is pretty good, walking the line between suspense and comedy. The acting, however, doesn't measure up: it comes off broad and flat. The video quality won't win any awards, either. Only the game's non-interactive parts fill the screen, and even then it's all grainy and blocky. Fortunately, movement looks acceptably smooth on the quarter-screen interactive segments. But the cheesy special effects depicting the various psychic phenomenon really ruin the mood.

The title's three discs hold some 5½ hours of video, but it takes less than an hour to play through a typical game. So the success of *Psychic Detective* depends on enticing players to try again and again. And though things are varied each time you play, many sequences show up every time.

But that's not the biggest problem. *Psychic Detective* can't seem to decide whether it's a goal-oriented strategy game or an interactive movie designed to hook you into caring about the characters. So, despite emotionally charged themes of power, dominance, sexuality, and other secrets from the subconscious, the whole thing boils down to nothing more than an intellectual exercise in gaming skill.

It's a start, though. And hopping into the head of the *Psychic Flash* might really give you a glimpse of the future—of computer entertainment, at least.

As a psychic detective, you can get inside these women's...minds.

So-called interactive movies get a bad rap from computer gamers, but that hasn't stopped game makers from trying to meld games and cinema into something new.

Psychic Detective, the latest all-full-motion-video attempt from Electronic Arts, isn't completely successful, but it introduces some new techniques that may one day give this fledgling medium mass-market appeal. Even better, it's actually fun to play—at least for a while.

You play Eric Fox, a putz of a side-show fortune-teller who calls himself the *Psychic Flash*, working a dive called the

TIPS



• If you can stop Silvia from suffocating Madam Tikunov, the old lady's *Black Diamond*

piece becomes very powerful.

• Hang out with Moki—he knows the backstory. • Find out what Max is afraid of, but don't stay in his head too long, or you're toast. • Don't ignore the bag people. Sometimes they "collect" important objects.

• Don't get sidetracked. Make a plan of action and stick to it throughout the entire movie to see where it leads you.

CHEATS

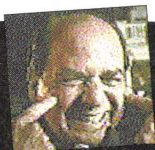


The game gives you only a single bookmark, or saved game. But you can rename the *pd.sav* file to

save as many games as you want. To activate that bookmark, just change the file you want to use back to *pd.sav* before you load the game.

Psychic Detective

Electronic Arts
800-245-4525



Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/50, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, VESA-compatible Super VGA card with 1MB RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive
List Price: \$59.95

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★ ★

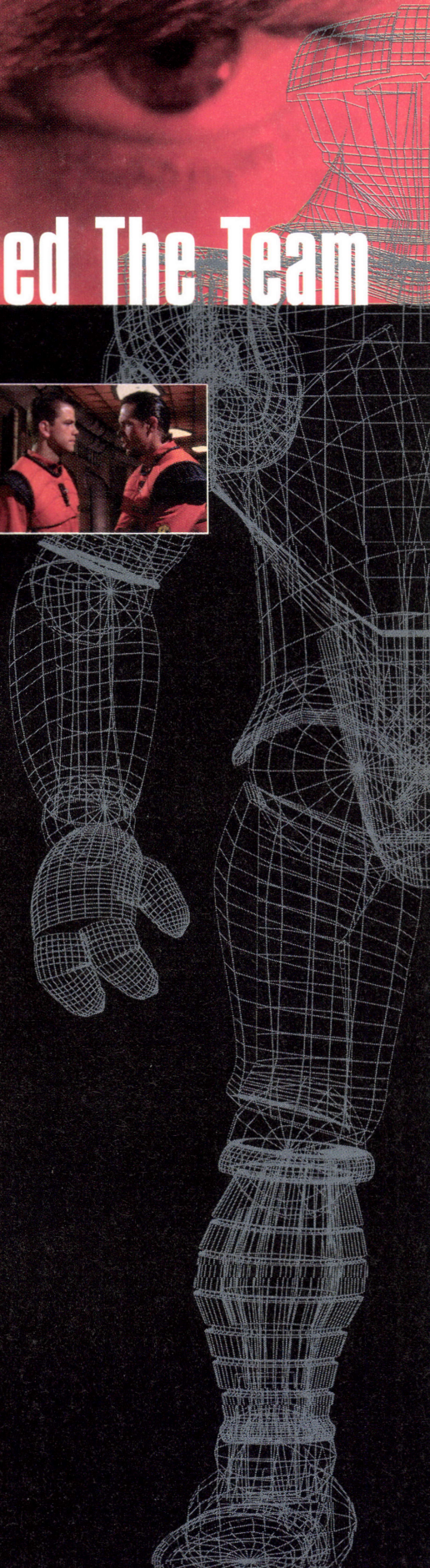
VALUE: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

A clever concept and decent writing almost overcome lame acting and wooden characters to create a truly involving interactive movie.

You've Assembled The Team

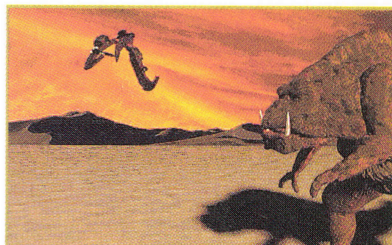


A New Hope...



Chronomaster

By Shane Mooney



The graphics and animation are as good as they get.

Getting stuck in an Arabian Knights universe may not be such a bad thing after all.



In the bizarre pocket universes of Chronomaster, the laws of physics need not apply.

Crooner Jim Croce once longed to put time in a bottle. If Croce were alive today, he could accomplish such fourth-dimensional feats by playing Chronomaster. Unfortunately, while engaged in this new adventure—designed by late science-fiction master Roger Zelazny—he'd discover that bottled time, like Chronomaster itself, isn't all it's cracked up to be.

You play Rene Korda, the Chronomaster, a man who has perfected the art of creating "pocket universes." These playthings for the ultra-wealthy resemble our own world, but contain custom-made designs and laws of physics that let witches, cyborgs, and flying carpets exist in more than mere imagination.

Since retirement, you've spent your near-immortality taking it

easy. Suddenly, you get a distress call indicating that someone or something has managed to freeze time in two pocket universes, jeopardizing countless lives. To restart time—and find the culprits—you must enter these universes and find the keys hidden within their depths. Surrounded by a pocket of time, you can move freely among the time-frozen worlds. You can also use "bottles of time" to remove certain objects from their prisons of stasis. But be careful: Objects such as time-frozen bullets could prove fatal when reactivated.

Chronomaster is without a doubt the most visually attractive adventure game of the past year, rich with fantastically rendered Super VGA worlds and magical universes. Everything moves smoothly and a dark, cinematic feel helps immerse you in the unfamiliar environment.

If only the plot were as clear as the graphics. The exceedingly enigmatic Chronomaster is to computer games what *Dune* was to movies. With little help from the manuals or the game itself, deciphering the Chronomaster universe, terms, and characters becomes a major challenge. Most players will find themselves a bit lost, at least for the early part of the game.

Similar problems obscure Chronomaster's star-powered voice acting. Voiceovers by Ron Pearlman (*Beauty and the Beast*), Lolita Davidovich (*Blaze*), and Brent Spiner (*Star Trek: The Next Generation*) prove uninspired. In fact, Pearlman's reading of Korda's atrocious lines makes listening to the dialogue almost painful. The other two turn in adequate performances, but none so stellar that it couldn't have been handled by unknowns.

And there's something about the game play that simply isn't that interesting. Beneath the sweet eye candy, intimidating storyline, and lackluster voice acting, Chronomaster is just typical adventure gaming fare. Once I figured out how to get around and became familiar with the interface (no small task), nothing about the game gave me an overwhelming desire to keep playing.

So while Chronomaster may not make time stand still, the hours won't fly by, either.

Chronomaster

Capstone
800-468-7226

Developer: DreamForge

Entertainment

Platform: DOS CD

Requires: 486/33, 4MB RAM,
MS-DOS 5.0, VESA-compatible VGA,
double-speed CD-ROM drive, Sound
Blaster-compatible

Street Price: \$59.95



TIPS



• When you first get to Urbs, you must use the missile launcher on Fort Battlefield to

move the statue. Using a bottle of time, load a missile and set the control panel until the target site is full of circles. Fire! • At the maze in The Caverns you need to take the path on Korda's left and then take the next left. Following the left passage from here will take you to everything of significance in the caverns.

• When you finally get to the World Key puzzle, save after every few steps. One wrong decision and Korda goes up in flames.

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★

VALUE: ★ ★ ★

A typical adventure game, Chronomaster's dressed up with brilliant graphics and big-name talent but has nowhere very interesting to go.



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Congo: Descent Into Zinj

By Shane Mooney

It isn't often that a computer game based on a movie turns out to be better than the film. Of course, if the movie is as bad as 1995's ludicrous Congo, the challenge isn't so great.

In fact, Viacom's new Congo: Descent Into Zinj is significantly more fun than either the movie or the original Michael "Jurassic Park" Crichton novel about deadly apes in exotic locales.

come in), and your mission is to proceed to the site of the last transmission from your old friend—and mission leader—Karen Ross. But before you get any rescue ideas, remember that your primary (and only) objective is to get those diamonds.

After dropping into the Congo, you use your first-person perspective to wander through the lushly rendered 3-D jungle in search of valuable tools and the lost expedition. You can toggle back and forth between your viewscreen/inventory interface and the Travicom workstation screen. The workstation screen lets you communicate with your home base, provides a satellite view of your whereabouts, and displays pictures of important hieroglyphics. On the viewscreen, you simply point and click in the direction you want to go or select inventory items to use.

Having seen the movie and read the book, I played this game with fairly low expectations. However, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that Congo wasn't all that bad. Together, the slick design, decent acting (from a crop of

new actors) and beautifully rendered jungle graphics make for some enjoyable play. Even the puzzles, while not terribly hard, are challenging enough to keep most gamers busy for awhile.

Congo is anything but flawless, however. While the game may be fun at times, it isn't going to set the world on fire. You simply won't find anything original enough to set it

above the crowd. I even found myself bored at times.

But don't get me wrong. If you're forced to choose between reading the book, renting the movie, or playing the game, you'll definitely want to fire up your PC.

Failing to solve a puzzle correctly merits a big kiss from Curious George.

Despite its mangy pedigree, the latest Congo manages to be a decent adventure game in its own right.

For those of you who managed to avoid the book and the movie, things haven't changed much: A megacorporation called Travicom has

developed a new laser technology that renders all other forms of telecommunication obsolete, thereby giving Travicom a competitive edge that'll make it the biggest company known to man (maybe even bigger than Microsoft). However, to get this nifty new laser working, Travicom needs extremely rare Type-3B diamonds. Reportedly, such gems can be found in an ancient diamond mine deep in the African Congo, but the expedition sent to investigate has suddenly stopped communicating. The company suspects foul play (that's where the apes

TIPS



• Before you go canoeing, be sure to look at the map so you know which directions to

turn when you get to forks in the path. • To get past the hole of spewing gas, simply stuff your inflatable raft into it. • When you get to the door with the eyes, you need to stick the "balls" you collect into the eyes in this order: 3, 1, 2, 6, 5.



Deep in the heart of the Congo lies a lush, 3-D rendered jungle full of puzzles and surprises.



Karen may be an old "friend," but she isn't too happy to know you're in the same jungle as her.

Congo: Descent Into Zinj

Viacom NewMedia
800-469-2539

Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, local-bus video, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
List Price: \$54.95

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ ★

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★

VALUE: ★ ★ ★

Its ancestors may have been a couple of chimps, but this game isn't too bad.

YOU'RE-Next Metro Times

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2050

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DAILY 50¢

DESIGNATED AREAS HIGHER



"The Bullet" McCree meets his untimely demise.

Bicycle now legendary Main St. incident. On May 26, Suzee the Bicycle 'Babe' skidded out near the fire hydrant on Derby and Main, flipped, and landed face-down on a vomit-covered manhole. As if on cue, the manhole slid open and a pack of Sewer Rats hauled Suzee off for a leisurely mid-afternoon snack.

The Architect Guild, in a last-ditch effort to save the city's landmark structures from the crippling excesses of the Dog Boys and Crap Pukes, have pledged their support to the Bicycle Messenger's effort.

Please see MESSENGER, A17

Cashco Inc. Rejects Homeless Funding

By Zippy Smith, TIMES STAFF WRITER
The city's homeless population has been a constant issue for the city council, but the same council has rejected funding for a new homeless shelter.

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Acid Attack Burns Overlord To A Crisp

■ Action in city-wide gang warfare heats up as the brutal killing of Frank "The Bullet" McCree leaves a power vacuum in the Northside. Responsibility for yesterday's assault remains a mystery.

By Zippy Smith, TIMES STAFF WRITER

Chaos reigns today in the Northwest District as kingpin Frank "The Bullet" McCree fell victim to a vicious and grisly acid blade bludgeoning.

His body, horribly disfigured by the noxious weapon, was discovered stapled to a street sign at 10:15 pm last night by a roving band of Headbangers on their way to break up the annual Disco Freak Ball at the County Museum.

"This hot and skanky stuff was dripping on my skull, so I looked up and there he was," stated the Headbanger who found McCree. "He looked like something that came out my butt," he further reflected. Other Headbangers who were present verified this assessment.

Experts at the scene say it looked like the work of the 7th Ave. Metal Burn Mutant Pack. But a letter pinned by a wad of gum to McCree's melted nose claims responsibility for the Happy Camper Gang in the name or their current employer, Billy "The Spike" Hernandez.

Whoever it was, they had no problem disposing of McCree's favorite hired guns, the brutal Monks of the Emerald Order. According to the Banker's Guild, sacred ritual objects from the now-defunct Order have fallen into the hands of a Used Car Salesman and are expected to fetch six figures on the black market. The Used Car Salesman was unavailable for comment but through his Faceman, disavowed any involvement in McCree's murder.

According to sources close to the grieving family, McCree was wearing his custom-fitted Kevalar Vest at the time of the attack, but it "had as much the same effect as soft butter resisting a butcher's knife," said one family member.

Kevalar is a high-tech material that is supposed to be bulletproof. "McCree was a two-bit crook who couldn't handle himself properly," said one source.



Headbanger who found McCree.

■ City Headed For Apocalypse Doomsday Cult Proclaims "The End Is Near"

By Stiv White, TIMES STAFF WRITER

In a direct assault on the beliefs of the "Followers of Squeaky," Doomsday Cult has proclaimed the end of the world.

CHAOS OVERLORDS

The Residents' Bad Day on the Midway

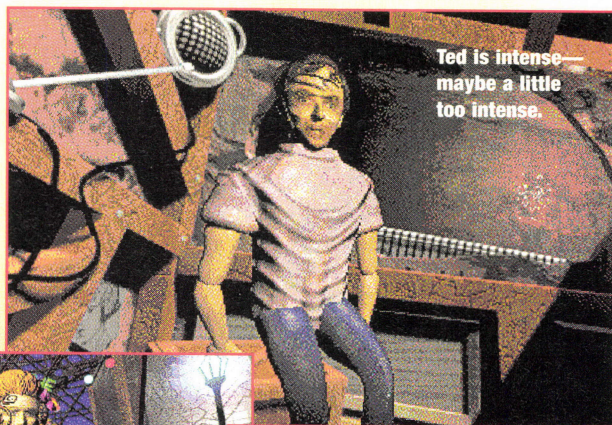
By Donald St. John

Did you ever get lost at the carnival when you were a kid? Remember the feeling of wandering around alone, a little bewildered by the garish lights, the bellowing barkers, and the rush of fairgoers? Eventually, you make a wrong turn—and you're behind the scenes, where the real work of the carnival takes place, where all the secrets are hidden.

That's the world you'll visit in *The Residents' Bad Day on the Midway*, a mystery game full of shifting personas, strange personalities, deep secrets, and even a Psychotic Killer. (Yes, you find out about the killer pretty quick if you're not careless—but that's not the real mystery.)

Bad Day presents an amazing mix of imagery and ideas that's hard to get used to at first. As you delve deeper into the game and get the lay of the land, however, you uncover a disturbing, compelling scenario to which you'll find yourself more and more drawn.

Much of the appeal lies in the collaboration of the Residents, the San Francisco-based troupe of absurdist musicians/writers, and Jim Ludtke, the brilliant computer animator who worked with the Residents on their innovative first



Ted is intense—maybe a little too intense.



Dixie'll tell you—it's a hard job running a carnival.



It's a rat's life...



What is she trying to tell you?

CD-ROM, *Freak Show*. The pairing results once again in a graphically rich game environment, driven

by a musical soundtrack that creates an air of danger and tension. But compared to the truly bizarre *Freak Show*, *Bad Day* establishes more believable 3-D characters in a swirling, dark, full-motion environment that perfectly mirrors the sensory overload of a carnival.

And the characters *need* to be believable, because they're the heart of the game. You start as Timmy, an innocent little boy poking around the Kill A Commie Shooting Gallery, the Sperm Whale Giving Birth To An Electric Eel exhibit, and Dagmar The Dog Woman. Stay as Timmy, though, and you won't get far: You need to experience the perspectives of all of the characters to garner the clues you need. You seek the secret of the Coma Man—what happened to him in "The Accident," and how to use that knowledge to save the carnival from the villainous IRS Man.

To win, you must become other characters by switching places as you interact with them. If *Bad Day* has a serious design flaw, this is it; as you start to play, you experience an inevitable sense of confusion from the constant shifting of roles and the weirdness of the carnival surroundings. To make this game worth your while, you'll need the patience to slowly gain a sense of who's who, what they're thinking, and what they know.

Fortunately, that sort of information is plentiful. You'll get hints from talking with various characters and rooting around the attractions. And as you're inside any given character, his or her thoughts appear on your screen (pay close attention to them). Eventually, you get used to the constant shifting of roles, and as you get to know the inhabitants, they reveal morally ambiguous, three-dimensional lives—becoming people with flaws and qualities not immediately apparent. That depth of the Residents' writing, coupled with superb graphics and challenging game play, makes *Bad Day on the Midway* a first-rate gaming experience.

The Residents' Bad Day on The Midway

Inscape
800-693-3253



Platform: Win/Mac CD

Requires: Windows: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, double-speed CD-ROM drive, 16-bit sound card;

Mac: 68030/33, 8MB RAM, System 7.1, double-speed CD-ROM drive

Street Price: \$49.95

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ 1/2

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

VALUE: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

There's more to the geeks and freaks of the Midway than meets the eye; you'll want to hang in there to find out what.

TIPS



• Save, save, and save again. Death lurks everywhere, and you need to become many

characters to get all the facts. That can take several plays.

• The odds of something bad happening go up significantly if you play one character for too long. • Sometimes, you can look for something only by not looking for it. • Not every carny is illiterate. • Madame Mandrake knows much, if you can figure out what she's saying. So does Ike. • Don't blow through the credits too quickly; rich graphical presentations shed light on the characters and their stories. • Beware the righteous.

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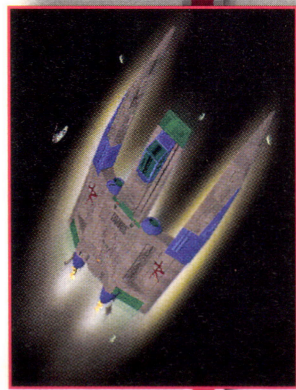
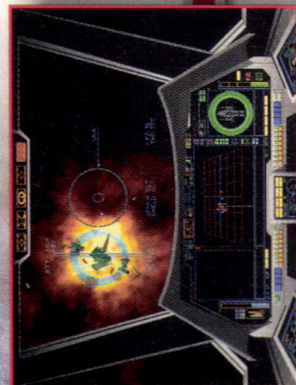


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Island Casino

You wanna play casino games on your personal computer? Go ahead, but I'm warning you—it's a sucker's bet.

That may be why Island Casino, a new two-disc game from GT Interactive Software and Williams Entertainment, tries so hard to distract you. Set in Puerto Rico's famed El San Juan Hotel and Casino (owned by Williams Entertainment, natch), you

can wander the casino's halls in a photographic slide show, share a video cocktail with a bikini babe in your room's hot tub, or watch promotional videos for the island. But with no ambient noises and only a few options, you won't really

Island Casino
GT Interactive Software
and Williams Entertainment
800-332-4300

Developer: Random Games

Platform: Win CD, Mac CD

Requires: Win CD: 486DX/33, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1 or higher, 256-color VGA graphics, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse, Windows-compatible sound card

Mac CD: 8MB RAM, System 7.0 or later, 256-color mode, double-speed CD-ROM drive

List Price: \$35



When you play craps on the Island, you roll the video to roll the dice.

believe you're on vacation.

Of course, you can also play some 25 different casino games—from 5- and 7-card stud poker to mini-baccarat and several types of slot machines—with either Island-

style or Las Vegas rules. Game play is simple, with limited animation. Although the craps table does use video clips, it's still hard to tell what's going on.

At least you can learn and practice without risking the nest egg. Island Casino makes at least token efforts to teach you how to play each game. When you approach a table, you can get video, animation, and text description from "Manuel," the El San Juan's resident expert, who lays out the rules but doesn't go into strategy. During the game, you can press F1 or H for more detailed text help, or retire to your room and turn on the TV set for longer video explanations. In fact, these seem to be the same videos you'd see on the house channel in your room in a real casino: Boring and self-serving in real life, just as boring and self-serving in a tiny video window on your computer screen.

Island Casino delivers all the trappings of a real casino, except one: the thrill of gambling.

—Fredric Paul

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2

PC Entertainment

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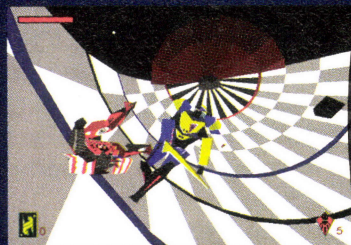
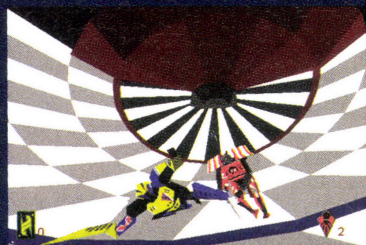
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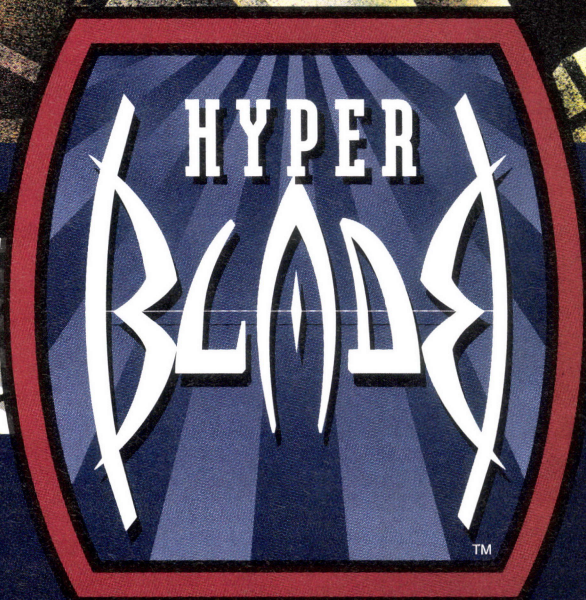
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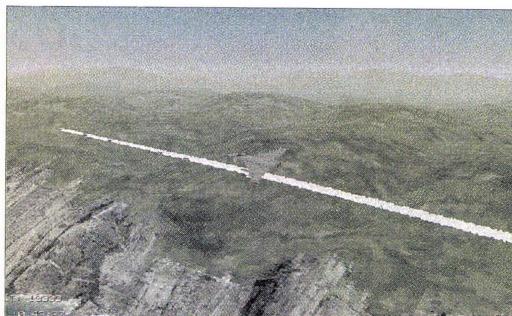
EF2000

By Anthony Lukban

Incursion by hostiles at 342 degrees...can you intercept?" crackles over the radio. I reply to the affirmative and hit my afterburners. Things are heating up, but strangely enough, I find it hard not to get distracted by the gorgeous Norwegian landscape spread outside my canopy.

Just another day in the action-packed virtual world of EF2000, Digital Image Design (DID) and Ocean of America's sequel to the TFX 2000 flight sim. EF2000 simulates the EuroFighter, a super-high-tech jet aircraft scheduled to make its military debut with NATO forces in the year 2000.

Appropriately, the EF2000 boasts the latest and most advanced weapons, including the long-range, air-to-air, radar-guided S-225 missile, which doesn't show up on



Take your pick from long-, medium-, or short-range missiles.



The Defensive Aids Sub System will automatically dispense your chaff and flares in combat.

enemy radar; and such sophisticated avionics as the Defensive Aids Sub System, which automatically assesses threats and dispenses chaff and flares as needed.

DID gleaned data from the Royal Air Force and British Aerospace to make the silicon EF2000 handle as realistically as possible. As a result, this is one complex sim—virtually every button on the keyboard has a function. Heck, many keys have several functions, accessed using the Alt, Shift, and Ctrl keys.

Fortunately, the comprehensive manual makes it relatively easy to get off the ground and into the action. The EF2000's clean cockpit also helps keep the complexity under control. Compared with the dial- and gauge-intensive planes flying in other sims—SSI's Su-27 Flanker, for example—the EF2000 is a flying TV set.

Once you get airborne, you'll be greeted with an exquisite Super VGA 3-D landscape.

The wide-angle view gives you a good look at bogies.

A variety of stellar views—fly-bys, "wide-angle" cockpit, weapons, multiple externals views, and instrument close-ups—add to the fun. The virtual cockpit, which lets you pan your field of view a full 360 degrees, even features a reflective canopy that glints in the sun.

Other features make it even more obvious that a lot of care went into building EF2000: You get preflight tower chatter, in-cockpit situation updates and warnings, wingmen with distinct foreign accents, and working control surfaces such as rudders, flaps, nose wheels, and air brakes. You get plenty to look at, too. Bursting flak, fiery explosions, translucent smoke, and visible wing damage comprise just a few of the courses in this visual feast.

EF2000 doesn't skimp on challenge, either. You can fly dozens of missions, ranging from training runs to combat air patrols and strategic bombing raids. Not enough? You can tackle an extensive computer-generated campaign. If you don't want to fight, use the free-flight mode to explore northern vistas and just enjoy the feeling of soaring that this game simulates so well.

Of course, all this entertainment requires a beefy PC to do it justice. 486 owners had better start thinking Pentium, and the more RAM, the better. But at least EF2000 puts that horsepower to good use.



• If the game bogs down in combat, try changing the detail level or selecting VGA to

get a smoother frame rate using ALT-D and ALT-R, respectively. • Use the S-225 missile to engage bogies from long distances. • To lessen your chances of being hit, reduce the closure rate by breaking away immediately after firing. • Use the wide-angle cockpit view (F2) to locate incoming missiles (and bandits during dogfights).

EF2000
Ocean of America
408-289-1200

Developer: Digital Image Design
Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/66, 8MB RAM, DOS 5.0, Super VGA card
List Price: \$59.95

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ ★

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Shannara

Stuck once again in his boring little village, Jak the stable boy craves adventure, though destiny seems to have more mundane tasks in mind for him. Suddenly, however, everything changes, and the fate of the world rests in his hands. It may sound like a rehash of the classic formula, but Shannara carries more heavyweight credentials.

Jak is the son of the legendary Shea Olmsford, whom fantasy fans should recognize from author Terry Brooks' popular *Shannara* series. Die-hard Brooks fans will enjoy reuniting with

the powerful druid Allanon and traveling to Shannara's four lands—populated by elves, trolls, gnomes, and dwarves—to reforge the shattered Sword of Shannara.

The game offers players a long and relatively difficult quest as they travel from Shady Vale to many of the world's famous locales, including the



The Elf in your crew saves the day with his elfstones.

Kingdom of Leah, Tyrsis, and, eventually, Skull Kingdom and the Hall of Kings.

Shannara does a nice job of re-creating each land and race, from the barbarian, warlike trolls in the desert to the meticulous, handy dwarves that dwell in the forest. The game's involved and interesting puzzles challenge you to use the powers of your ethnically mixed party of adventurers to negotiate with each land's indigenous folk for crucial magical items.

Unfortunately, the game's graphics and sound fall flat—literally. Legend would have done more justice to Brooks' work with a more detailed 3-D world instead of the flat, 2-D map you use to go from place to place. And while character voices come through loud and clear, other sound effects seem merely average, and the poor-quality soundtrack quickly gets annoying. Even the game's combat interface, which provides numerous attack options, still doesn't make for inspired battles.

So while the Brooks faithful may enjoy interacting with familiar characters in the *Shannara* universe, newcomers are likely to be disappointed.

—Bill Meyer



The memorable characters in Terry Brooks' best-selling novels come to life in Shannara.

Shannara
Legend Entertainment
800-658-8891

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486/33, 4MB RAM,
Super VGA, CD-ROM drive, Sound
Blaster-compatible
List Price: \$59.95



GAME PLAY:	★ ★ ★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★ 1/2

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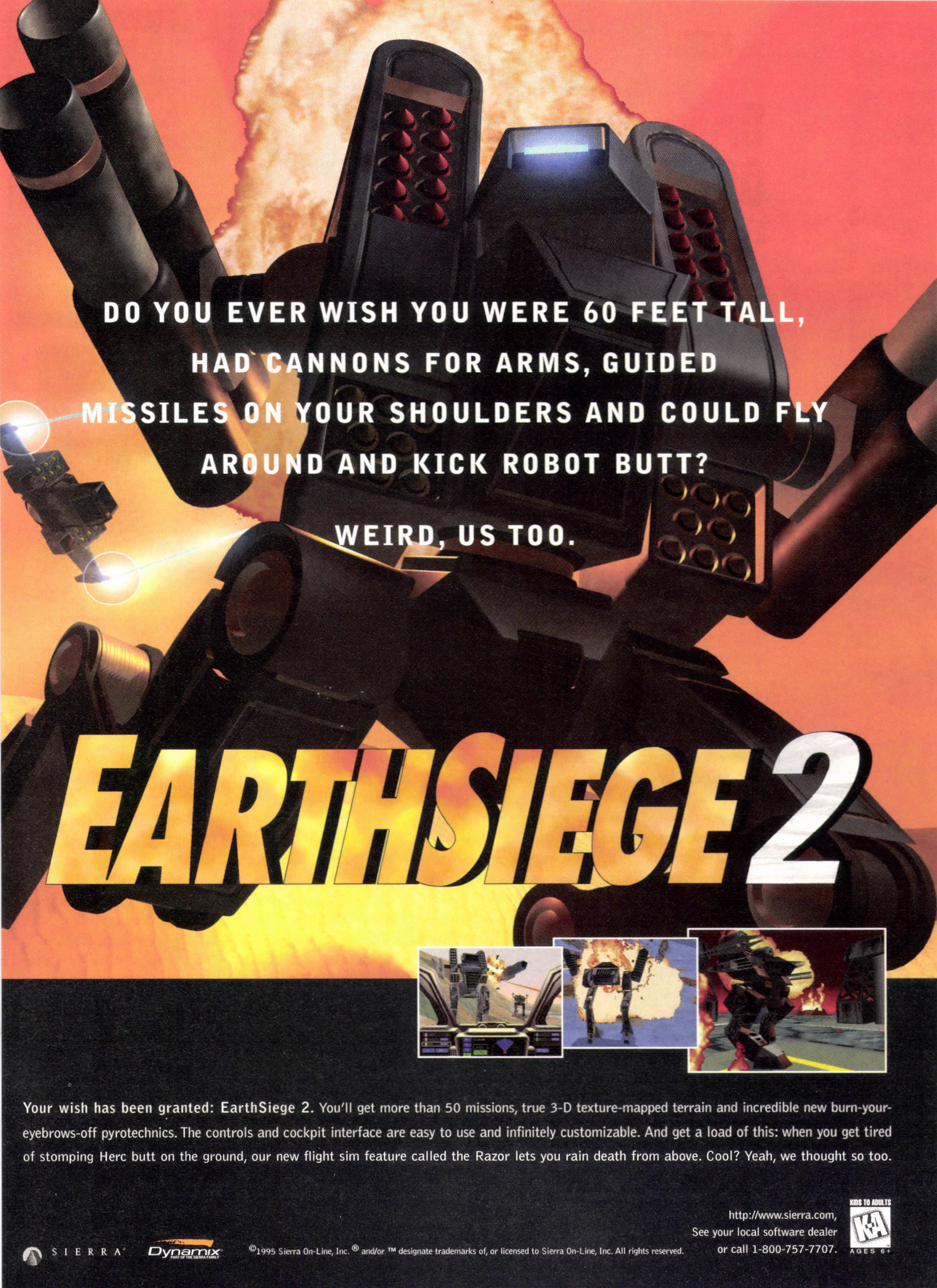
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the longboard.
Then the
shortboard.
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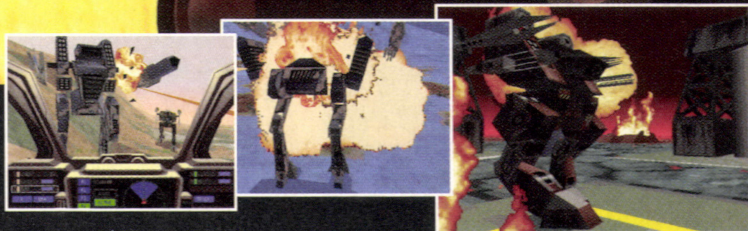
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Druid: Daemons Of the Mind

By Christopher Lindquist

Sometimes things just don't work out the way you planned.

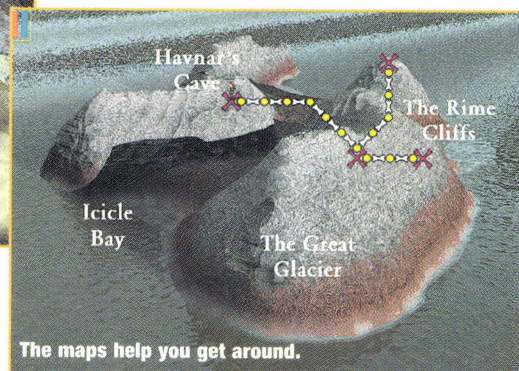
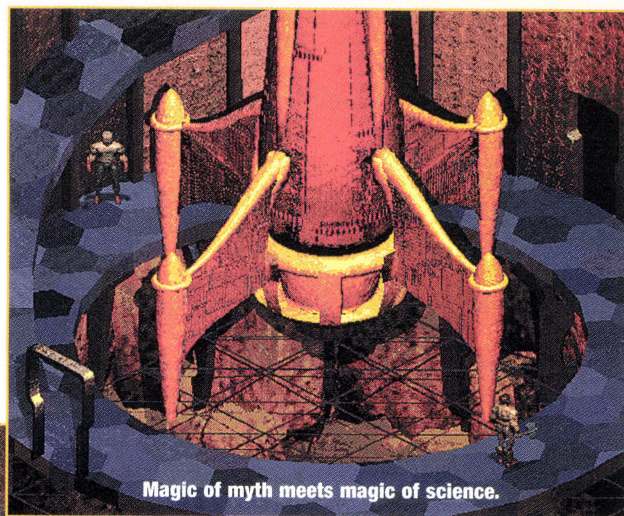
When Sir-Tech Software started showing off *Druid*—the company's hot-looking role-playing game for the everyman—a lot of people got pretty excited, including some of us at *PC Entertainment*. That's why we made the game the subject of one of our exclusive Guided Tours (January, page 57).

Druid was supposed to burst traditional role-playing boundaries by concentrating less on character stats and complex magic systems in favor of an involving story and an easy-to-use interface. Unfortunately, while the game succeeds on some levels, it doesn't quite measure up to its lofty goals.

As the story goes, you play an unnamed piece of brawny beefcake who is magically transported to a mysterious island by a collaboration of druids. They inform you that they need your help to find a missing companion. So off you go, slaying monsters, unearthing clues, and questioning the locals for more information.

The first thing you'll notice is the game's spectacular appearance. Detailed 3-D rendered characters and backgrounds seem to leap off the screen. They're marred only by a limited, fairly dark palette of browns and grays. Properly heroic-sounding music accompanies your journey. Even better,

you can control the game almost entirely with the mouse. You simply point and click to



move and fight, and right-click to call up the clever spellcasting system. A simple tap of the space bar calls up your inventory and stats.

Despite its innovations, *Druid* lacks several elements that could have made it truly special. Combat—especially early in the game—can be frustratingly difficult. According to the game's instructions, you need merely click on your opponent to let loose a variety of offensive moves, or click on yourself to defend. Reality isn't nearly so neat. In many cases, clicking frantically on an enemy results in no response at all. Instead, you must often click behind or next to the opposing character to elicit a reaction. And spending time finding the sweet spot can get you killed. Not only that, but while your first attack against a certain character may yield a quick demise, a quick reload and second attack sometimes result in swift victory—with no change in your tactics. A game targeting novice role players shouldn't make such mistakes.

Other nits abound. While you converse with the druids via voice, every other character talks in text. Also, the vast majority of human characters look almost identical to your character, right down to the big biceps and beard. The fine sound effects, such as crashing axe blows, are extremely limited. Hit-point regeneration occurs with time, so you'll often want to spend 10 or 15 minutes away from the keyboard while your character recovers his strength. Plus, you get just three save games. Finally, more advanced players drawn in by the cool graphics will find most puzzles too simple, resulting in a rather short game.

Sure, beginning gamers will find much here to enjoy, once they figure out the quirky combat and get used to the long waits for healing. But *Druid* could have been much more than just an entry-level RPG. Maybe next time.

Druid: Daemons Of the Mind

Sir-Tech Software
800-447-1230

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 4MB RAM,
MS-DOS 5.0, double-speed CD-ROM
drive
List Price: \$49.95



GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★

VALUE: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Although it's beautiful, *Druid's* quirks keep it from true greatness.

TIPS



• Save before every fight. An opponent might be tough the first time around and a pushover

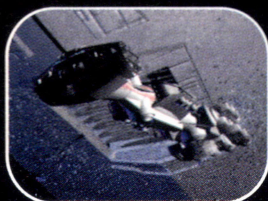
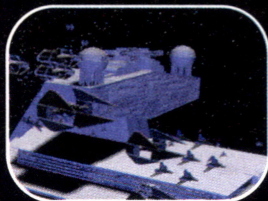
the next. • You need only collect three stones to activate the first transport ring. • Blood isn't the only thing that stains. • Don't bother fighting the jailer. Get him what he asks for instead. • You need to carry away two books from the library. • Fighting not only builds character stats, it also yields valuable prizes.

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PBA Bowling

Bethesda Softworks' Xⁿengine 3-D game-creation technology is cool. Unfortunately, PBA Bowling for Windows 95—made with the Xⁿengine—is not.

Bethesda created the Xⁿengine (also used in Terminator: Future Shock, page 50) to combine smooth movement with terrific lighting and sound effects. Unfortunately, PBA Bowling wastes all that technical sophistication on a game that's graphically and sonically dull, unnecessarily complex, and just not much fun.

For starters, you have to play either by yourself or against other human opponents at the same keyboard. You won't find

modem or network support or the ability to play against computer players. The jerky bowler-and-pin animations and a video clip repertoire that seems to consist of two repetitive segments ("Happy Bowler" and "Sad Bowler") are just as bad. And while the sound effects accu-

rately mimic real-life bowling, where's the pumping rock-and-bowl soundtrack?

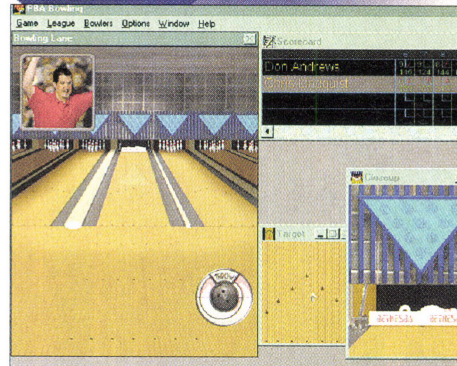
Even worse, the game play quickly becomes exceedingly easy and repetitive. You click and re-

lease on a small bowling ball to set the power of your throw, then click again to input the amount of spin. After only a bit of practice, you'll soon find yourself hurling strike after strike on the Beginner and Intermediate settings. The Pro setting increases the challenge (you have to click faster and more accurately), but the whole thing becomes pretty mind-numbing after a while.

You won't find any relief playing team captain, either. Starting a "league" is more complex on screen than down at the local lanes, requiring you to go through several steps to create players and teams, import played games, and set up passwords.

The final score? PBA Bowling winds up in the gutter.

—Christopher Lindquist



PBA Bowling won't bowl you over.

PBA Bowling

Bethesda Softworks
800-677-0700

Platform: Win CD, Win 95 CD
Requires: 486DX/33, 4MB RAM, Windows 3.1, Super VGA
List Price: \$29.99–\$34.99

GAME PLAY:	★ ★
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ 1/2
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ 1/2



PC Entertainment

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Rebel Assault II Official Player's Guide

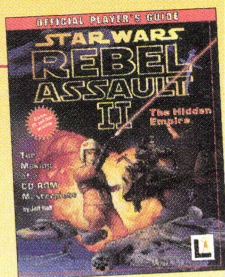
By Jeff Hoff

Can you foil Lord Vader's evil plot to destroy the Rebel Alliance? This guide includes strategies, cheat codes, a complete discussion of how to use the Difficulty Editor, and a thorough look at the making of this CD-ROM masterpiece.

\$19.99

BK-369

Platform: PC CD-ROM



The Beast Within Official Player's Guide

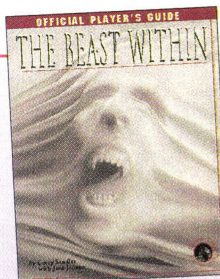
By Corey Sandler

Help Gabriel Knight and his capable assistant, Grace, investigate werewolf attacks in Germany. This guide includes a comprehensive walk-through, a hint section, and a look at the creators of this amazing video adventure.

\$19.99

BK-368

Platform: PC CD-ROM



The Dig Official Player's Guide

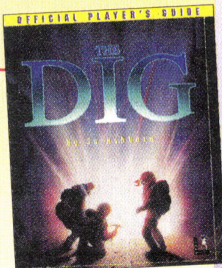
By Jo Ashburn

Join Commander Boston Low and his crew in a spectacular adventure that takes you from Earth to a planet that's light years from home. This guide gives you everything you need to safely pilot your crew back, including hints, tips and a complete walk-through.

\$19.99

BK-361

Platform: PC CD-ROM



Police Quest: SWAT Official Player's Guide

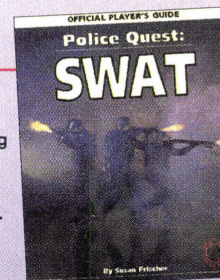
By Susan Frischer

Inside you'll find a complete walk-through of all training and call-up scenarios, a catalog of SWAT equipment, and a comprehensive tactics chapter. There's also an in-depth interview with former LAPD Chief Daryl Gates.

\$19.99

BK-370

Platform: PC CD-ROM

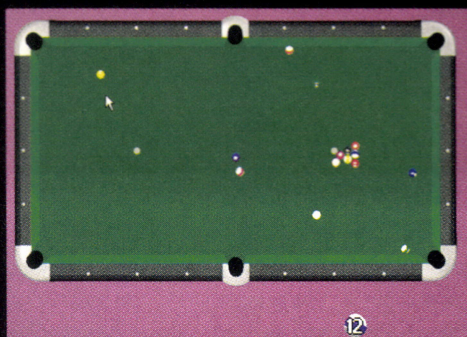
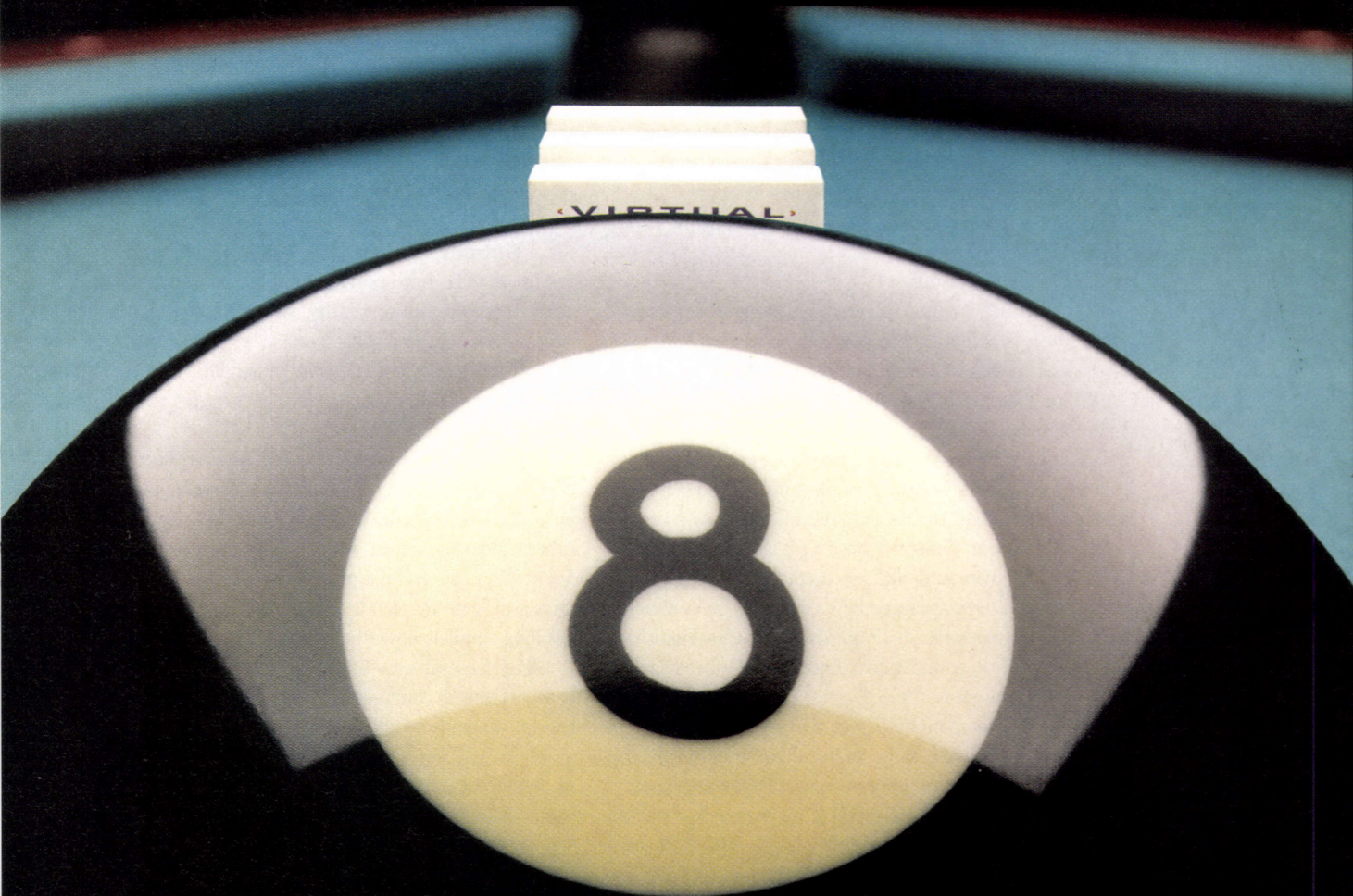


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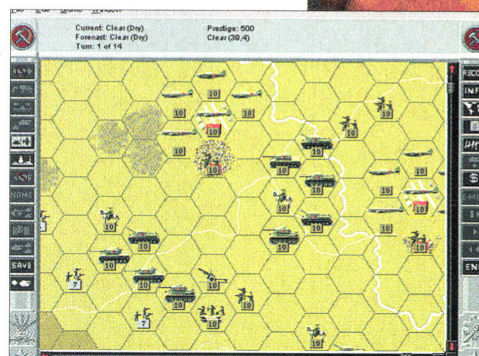
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Panzer General, the epic World War II strategy game from Mindscape and Strategic Simulations, succeeded on many levels. Its crafty balance of ease of use, sharp graphics, and challenging scenarios made it a hit with players of all types—not just strategy fanatics. Now, the much-anticipated sequel, Allied General, has arrived, with a difference. This game has made the move to Windows—a turn that will no doubt have many Panzer General fans up in arms.

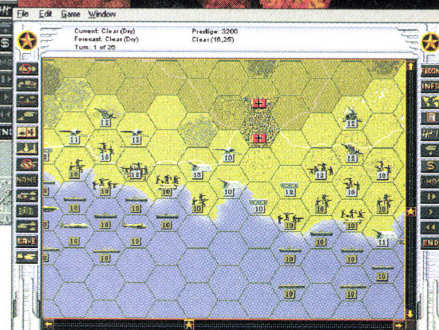
But first the good stuff.

Panzer General teased players by letting them control Allied forces in individual scenarios but not during full-blown campaigns. In Allied General, you can play as the Americans, British, or Russians in any one of three massive campaigns. Take the helm of the British Expeditionary Force in North Africa, for example, and you could be invited to continue your campaign in Western Europe—providing you knock Rommel's hardened Africa Corps out of commission first.

As with Panzer General, you simply click on individual units to move them and click on enemy units to attack. Of course, the Allies bring along new unit types to command, including Sherman tanks, B-17 bombers, Rangers, Finnish ski troops, and British commandos. Once you've moved each of



As the Russians, use superior numbers to overwhelm German forces.



Command Allied forces during Operation Overlord.

Germans from capturing the city of Kasserine. However, you must seize and hold several cities on the battle map to achieve even a Minor victory, which hardly sounds like a “defensive” strategy. The game’s “readme” file provides more information, but not nearly enough. The manual also omits the unit equipment tables that provided useful technical specs in Panzer General.

Meanwhile, the move to Windows brings interface changes sure to disturb some Panzer General fans. The original’s autoscrolling feature, which made the map follow your cursor about the screen, is gone. This time, you get five different ways to scroll the map, including the cursor keys and standard Windows scroll bars. Once I got used to the new scrolling features, however, I liked them just fine.

Allied General also brings new system requirements, so Panzer General commanders with lower-end machines will have to upgrade to play the sequel. Instead of running on a 386/33 and 4MB of RAM, the new game demands a 486 and 8MB of RAM. That’s a lot to ask, considering the lack of fancy new features (other than some nice newsreel-type video footage).

For those who have the computing horsepower, though, Allied General proves a worthy successor. If you can run it, you’ll enjoy hundreds of hours of absorbing game play.

TIPS



• When playing as the Russians, think strength in numbers. With the Americans, think air superiority.

As a Brit, think balanced attack. • Most scenarios require you to take all the victory objectives by the last turn to achieve a Minor victory. Major victories require you to take all objectives more quickly. • To win even a Minor victory in the Kasserine scenario, you must hold all but one of the victory objectives.

• Choosing the Easy enemy artificial intelligence can actually make some scenarios tougher. The enemy units tend to just stand and fight to the death rather than fall back and regroup—a real problem if you need to get someplace fast. If you’re having trouble on Easy, switch to Hard.

your units, the Axis get their turn. Optional battle animations depict the units taking part in skirmishes, while an information bar at the top of the screen informs you of battle outcomes.

But Allied General is more than just the old game played on a different side. You now get a dossier that records your victories and defeats, and a history option that tracks the battle records of your core units. Unfortunately, the scenario editor is still AWOL.

Overall, the scenarios and campaigns seem better designed than their Panzer General counterparts, requiring more strategic thinking to win. Once again, victories come in Minor and Major varieties, but you may find it’s much tougher to accomplish the latter this time around.

One reason is that the game provides little information about scenario victory conditions. Take the American Kasserine scenario in the Africa campaign, for example. You’re instructed only to go on the defensive and prevent the

Allied General

Mindscape
800-234-3088

Developer: Halestrom

Platform: Win 3.1/Win 95 CD, Power Mac

Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, Windows 3.1, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, Sound Blaster-compatible
Street Price: \$49.99

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

VALUE: ★ ★ ★ ★

Allied General delivers more of what made Panzer General great, this time under Windows.



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PC CD-ROM



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Great Naval Battles IV: Burning Steel, 1939-1942

By John Withers

Let's face it: battleships are the real deal. Sure, carriers rule the seas today, but when it comes to commanding a great big ship that blows up stuff in a satisfying, hands-on kind of way, nothing beats firing shells the size of a Volvo.

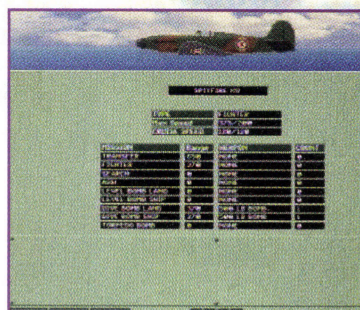
For battleship aficionados, Great Naval Battles IV: Burning Steel presents the dream of a lifetime: the chance to command the heavy-metal monsters that roamed the Atlantic at the beginning of World War II. The most advanced naval combat simulation ever to hit the PC,

GNB IV offers you command of hundreds of different ships, including Britain's Queen Elizabeth, Hood, and Prince of Wales; Germany's Bismarck, Sharnhorst, and Graf Spee; and even the latter country's legendary H-Class ships—the biggest gun-toting behemoths ever put to sea (though they never saw action).

Players can take control of the game in two ways. The task force command level lets you order about groups of ships, planes, and even subs during large tactical engagements. Artificial intelligence simulates crews carrying out duties such as gunnery automatically. Armchair admirals interested only in the big picture can play the game com-



Multiple scenarios and an editor give the game a lot of depth.



Airstrikes are effective but have a long lead time. Coordinate them early.

fortably this way without ever manually aiming a salvo.

However, many players may find such high-level maneuvering fairly antiseptic. Great Naval Battles IV also lets you dig into the minutiae with a manual mode that requires you to run everything

from damage control and navigation to air ops and spotting.

The game also boasts exceptional customization features. Dozens of different adjustments allow players to tweak each side to suit their own views of perfect historical accuracy—or to handicap an overly talented enemy. Gun effectiveness, torpedo dud rate, visibility factors, reload rates, damage control effectiveness, and sight reaction times represent just a few of the customization options. Four difficulty levels, from Beginner to Expert, let you adjust enemy AI to suit your skills. The Advanced and Expert levels play a very strong game, with solid enemy AI and a powerful “fog of war” feature that makes enemy contact difficult to establish and maintain.

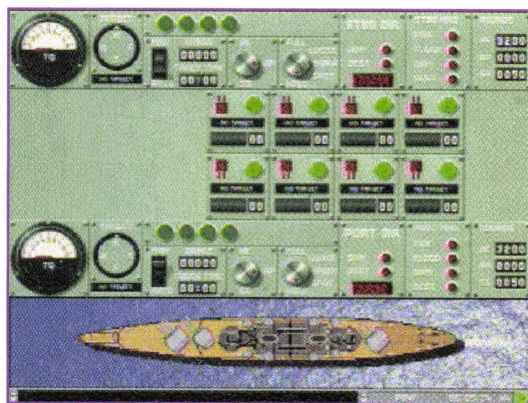
The game comes with 19 different Atlantic and Mediterranean scenarios, including 4 longer campaign scenarios with lengths ranging from 10 to 22 game days. In real life, battleship shootouts were rare, but the game lets you live out the megabattles that never quite happened. What if the French fleet had been ready to fight, for example, instead of being scuttled?

For vets who run right through the provided scenarios, Great Naval Battles IV includes a solid random-scenario generator and a fully equipped scenario editor to build custom missions. Though the game isn't a snap to figure out, an hour or two of practice should make you fairly comfortable controlling ship functions.

Great Naval Battles IV also gives plenty of bang for the buck. Accurate naval sims, much like naval warfare, aren't quick affairs. Even with time compression, most of the scenarios take at least an hour of real time to complete, and many require twice as long. The addition of random and user-generated scenarios makes the title an even better value.

The game does have some minor annoyances. Subs seem overly weak and useful only as spotters, not attackers. And the lookout station wheels to a given heading in painfully slow motion during compressed time modes.

But these are piddling complaints. For anyone thirsting to drive the dreadnoughts of the sea, Great Naval Battles IV is just your command.



You can control all the awesome firepower of history's largest ships.

Great Naval Battles IV: Burning Steel, 1939-1942

SSI
800-601-7529

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386/33, 8MB RAM,
DOS 5.0, Super VGA, double-speed
CD-ROM drive, Sound Blaster-
compatible
Street Price: \$45

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

VALUE: ★ ★ ★ ★

With plenty of play time and good play mechanics, Great Naval Battles IV is an excellent sim loaded with options and excitement.

TIPS

- When Target Quality gets high, manually switch the gunnery pattern to Narrow Mode to score more decisive hits.
- Draw attention away from your larger ships by having your destroyers perform high-speed torpedo runs at close range with an enemy group.

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Daryl F. Gates' Police Quest: SWAT

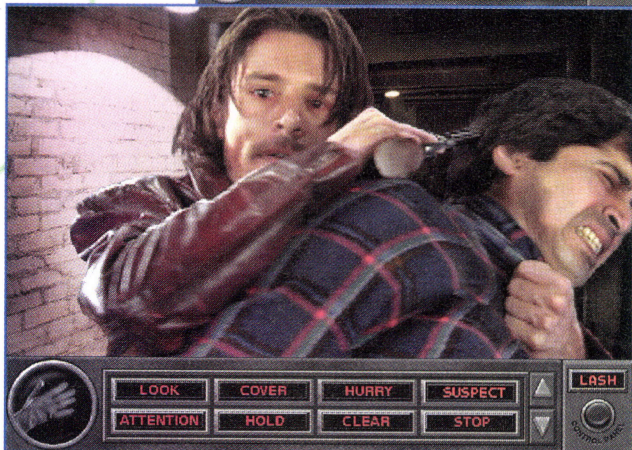
By Peter Olafson

Daryl F. Gates' Police Quest: SWAT is, well... something of a bust.

In this ambitious strategy/role-playing game from Sierra On-Line, you play the "S.W.A.T. Pup"—a new recruit in the Los Angeles Police Department's Special Weapons and Tactics unit. You spend part of your time participating in "call-ups" (field missions) with the rest of the unit, and the remainder honing your weapons skills on the range (and maybe even qualifying as a sniper).

Most of the "call-up" sequences take place in crisp, first-person full-motion video. Talk about cinema vérité: You're right there—providing cover for the unit scouts, checking out possible hiding places, confronting suspects and hostages.

The designers have clearly attempted to work around the "twitch" factor of most video-dominated games by giving players a range of tasks and tools. You'll have to learn a set



Ever wonder how you'd react in a crisis? Time to find out.

Prove yourself in the field and you'll move up in rank.

of hand signals, use the LASH radio accurately and efficiently, and master cornering techniques to keep yourself from getting killed.

And, sometimes, of course, you'll have to shoot.

The scenarios themselves can be intense and involving—to the extent that, midway through the second one, I caught myself nodding gravely in response to my leader's hand signals. You participate in just three missions, but you tackle them in different roles (from pup to ele-

ment leader) and they unfold in different ways.

This approach makes for a handsome, COPS-like game, but it's a mistake in terms of game play. Though linear in nature, Police Quest games have always thrived on basic freedom of movement. Even other Sierra titles, like Phantasmagoria and Gabriel Knight II with their filmed characters, tend to use video as a tool rather than pure content.

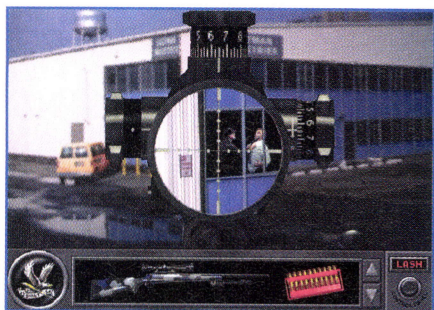
Here, however, the video is the whole show, drastically restricting your freedom of action. Basically, you can do the right thing or you can hear "Amazing Grace" from the wrong side of a coffin lid. Oh, you'll find a little room to maneuver, but you're following the game's script rather than writing it. You can't turn. And as a sniper, you can't select position or cover: You just line up and take the shot. I'm sure that S.W.A.T. operations are strictly proscribed and ordered in exactly this way, but authenticity doesn't always lend itself to good game play.

The cops also seem realistic, and you get the impression they'd be nice guys (and real cops) if you met them outside the game. But they sometimes sound as though they're reading from a departmental manual.

I also wish Police Quest: SWAT was more encompassing. It seems to begin and end at the station house door. My character had a dozen decorations before I accidentally discovered that I'd been awarded anything. No awards ceremonies. No note in his mailbox. No mailbox, for that matter.

Finally, I had problems getting SWAT to work consistently. Under DOS, it crashed every time I clicked the gunsight on an object during the first scenario and almost every time I tried to access the fourth of the four CDs. Under Windows 3.11, it crashed when I interrupted my supervisor's opening schtick, and it crashed when I didn't.

The verdict? Busted.



Show off your marksmanship and qualify as a sniper.

Daryl F. Gates' Police Quest: SWAT

Sierra On-Line
800-757-7707

Platform: DOS/Win CD
Requires: 486/33, 8MB RAM, Super VGA, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse
Street Price: \$54.95



TIPS

- During missions, watch your element leader like a hawk for hand signals. It could save your life.
- When covering the back of the house in the first mission, don't be stymied by the locked gate. Use your LASH radio to call for the battering ram.
- If you're using the M-16 in the warehouse scenario, use the "slice pie" option on the left side of the door.

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★ ★

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★

VALUE: ★ ★ ★

Police Quest goes full-motion video, and turns out a classy but overly restricted action/strategy game.



FANTASY GENERAL™

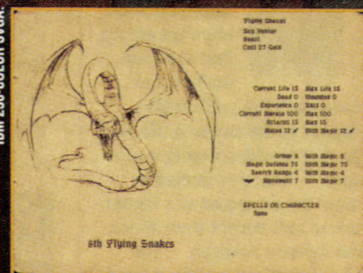
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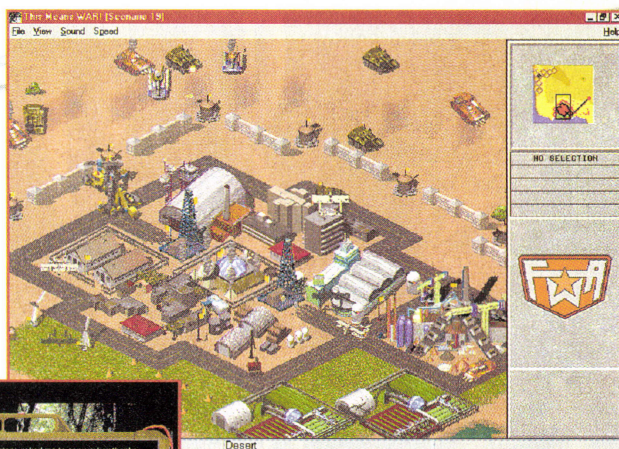
This Means War!

By David Israels

The release of This Mean's War! heralds the latest contender in the real-time wargame category. Facing stiff competition from Virgin's fast-paced Command & Conquer and Blizzard's exquisitely designed Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness, MicroProse's entry finishes last. This Means War! suffers the fate of many Windows 3.1 games: It's pretty to look at but runs too slow.



Between-mission briefings tell you how you're doing.



To win, you always have to locate and destroy the enemy command center.

es toward mayhem.

But if you want to do more than just condemn troops to the killing fields, you'll have to learn how to manage your war machine. Unfortunately, the game's abysmal manual isn't much help with either

game mechanics or strategy.

It soon becomes clear, however, that minerals are the game's coin of the realm. You start out with 50,000 units, but to ensure a steady supply your engineers need to build a mine—fast. It's equally important to keep barracks and factories working at peak efficiency. To do that, you have to maintain a delicate balance among energy supplies, food sources, and civilian population.

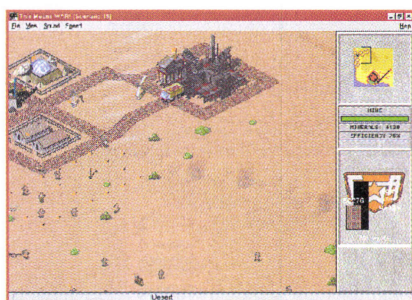
Combat could have been better balanced. It's true that after the first few scenarios the computer is quite difficult to defeat. But it's no fun to realize that your opponent's toughness is due mostly to an obvious cheat, not superior artificial intelligence. In too many scenarios, the computer simply starts with more units and buildings, including the all-important mine. Fighting is also hampered by a small game map that often places opposing forces too close together. And unlike the competition, MicroProse neglected to include network and modem play.

On the plus side, the game uses line of sight in a fairly sophisticated way. A shading option tells you just how much of the battle scene your troops can see. (Unfortunately, the shading also slows the program considerably.)

Graphically, the game is top-notch, with finely modeled units rendered in crisp Super VGA. The use of hills and valleys—a complex graphics feature not usually seen in these games—enhances the realism. The sound effects are equally well done, and the music is a pleasant surprise.

But all that chrome simply adds to the product's essential flaw: that game play is severely hampered by the dismal performance of the Windows 3.1 graphics engine. On a 486DX2/66 with 16MB of RAM, troops and vehicles often inch along at a crawl, even at the game's fastest speed. Airplanes float through the skies in a kind of slow-motion ballet. And when a mortar fires, the missile can take more than a dozen seconds to lazily reach its target.

Unhappily, the groaning graphics make this game much less fun than it could have been.



You really want to win? Then mine, mine, mine.

TIPS



- Dig in and play defense. Your troops can often get off the first shot, and units on the

move can't fire until they've stopped at the center of the first tile that provides a clear line of sight. • Troops in formation under the command of a higher-ranked unit benefit from attack and defense bonuses. • The best formations are the column and inverted scoop. • In later scenarios, use light, heavy, and missile tanks whenever they're available.

CHEATS



- To expose the location of the opposing forces, click on the right side of the screen and type

"max." • You can destroy any unit by turning your mouse cursor into a lightning bolt. Click on the right side of the screen and type "ronpost." Turn off death mode in the view menu to avoid killing your own units.

This Means War!

MicroProse
800-879-7529

Developer: Starjammer Studios
Platform: Win CD
Requires: 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM,
Windows 3.1, Super VGA, double-speed
CD-ROM drive
List Price: \$48.99

GAME PLAY:	★ ★ 1/2
GETTING STARTED:	★ ★ ★
GRAPHICS:	★ ★ ★ ★
SOUND CHECK:	★ ★ ★ ★
VALUE:	★ ★ ★

The action looks great, but you'll fight this war at a snail's pace.

Power Dolls

It's easy to understand how a desktop commander could get tired of ordering about mud-soaked dog faces. Wouldn't troops of comely yet battle-hardened babes make for a better time?

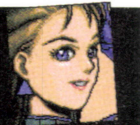
Perhaps, but not if we're talking about Megatech's Power Dolls.

Power Dolls ("Dolls" stands for Detachment of Limited Line Service) puts you in command of combat-armored troops done up in traditional Japanese anime style—Bambi eyes, big breasts, and all. Don't look for the cartoon nudity present in some of Megatech's more purrulent titles, though.

Power Dolls

Megatech
800-258-6342

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386DX/25, 4MB RAM,
MS-DOS 6.0, VGA, mouse
List Price: \$49.95



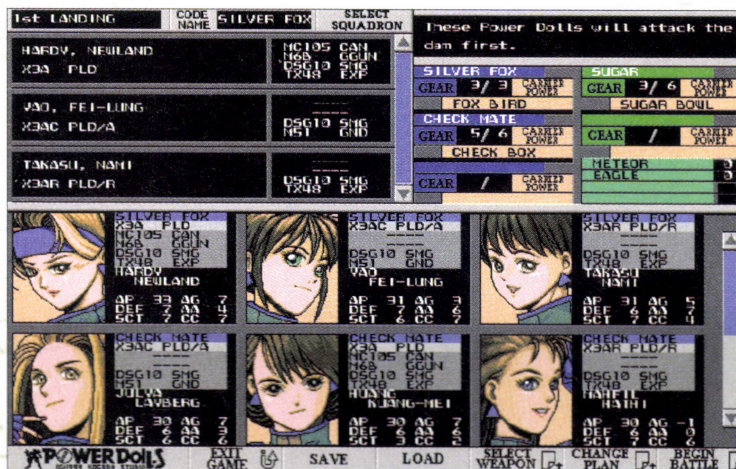
GAME PLAY: ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ 1/2

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ 1/2

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ ★

VALUE: ★ ★



Babes in battle armor aren't enough to save Power Dolls.

All you see here are more Puritanical portraits of the women in question.

The Dolls are out to put an end to a civil war on a distant planet, though it's never exactly clear whose side you're fighting on—and you probably won't care. The game's core seems solid

enough, allowing you to select, assign, arm, and direct your forces from the top-down map. You'll also find all the standard wargame fare—opportunity fire, movement, and line-of-site, which are affected by terrain, artillery support, air strikes, and so on.

However, you'll also encounter mediocre graphics and sound effects, poorly written documentation, an unforgivably short list of missions (nine!), no scenario editor, and strictly regimented battle plans that offer little flexibility in how you achieve your goals.

In other words: Ignore the big-eyed gals on the box, guys. This one's not worth taking home. —Christopher Lindquist

Battles in Time

In the distant future, humanity lives in complete peace.

Unfortunately, the same isn't true for the marauding aliens who show up on Earth looking to gain some cheap real estate. In order to relearn war strategy, the wise rulers of our planet whip up a quick time machine and send a select group of wannabe Napoleons back through history. You are one of the chosen few.

Thus begins Battles in Time, a cool little wargame from the folks at QQP.

You start with a high aerial view of city-filled terrain. The

more cities you control, the more building points you get to create various army units used to attack your opposition and acquire territory.

It sounds pretty basic, but the time travel aspect adds an amusing twist. You fight in four different epochs: a prehistoric

landscape dominated by trained dinosaurs, battles between Roman legions, World War II mechanized warfare, and the futuristic weaponry of 2025. Then you get to fight the aliens. Unfortunately, you can't transport weapons between eras to find out how a Roman legion would fare against a couple of M1A1 Abrams tanks.

The combat isn't exactly realistic, either, but it is consistent and well-balanced—and what can you expect from reptilian mayhem? You'll find that the game's interface may balk while scrolling the map, even on a fast machine. However, the interesting premise and quick-to-learn simplicity make this one a charmer. With modem support, solid artificial intelligence, 12 individual scenarios, and a campaign mode, Battles in Time packs enough meat to satisfy anyone looking for an easy-to-play wargame with a good hook.

—John Withers

Battles in Time

QQP
800-880-1718

Platform: DOS CD
Requires: 386/25, 4MB RAM,
Sound Blaster-compatible, mouse
List Price: \$35-\$45

GAME PLAY: ★ ★ ★ ★

GETTING STARTED: ★ ★ ★ ★

GRAPHICS: ★ ★ ★

SOUND CHECK: ★ ★ 1/2

VALUE: ★ ★ ★ ★



Balanced combat and ease of use make Battles in Time worth a look.



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Hot Joysticks, Cool Prices

By Steve Klett

New joysticks continue to flood a market already brimming with updated offerings from old-timer CH Products and up-and-comer Suncom Technologies (see "Joystick Bonanza," February, page 100). Now ACT Laboratories, Advanced Gravis, and InterAct Accessories take the field with sticks targeting cost-conscious players.

Advanced Gravis Thunderbird

Gravis wowed PC enthusiasts last year with its massive, 24-button Phoenix joystick, which featured a radical, sharp-edged design. However, the space-consuming stick left a lot to be desired in the ergonomics department. The company aims to fix that problem with its new Thunderbird controller.

The compact Thunderbird design eliminates the Phoenix's awkward extension arm (and its eight buttons) and adds a hefty metal base. The stick also has a contoured handle, a considerable improvement over its predecessor's jagged, uncomfortable grip.

Control junkies may notice that the Thunderbird lacks some of the Phoenix's multitude of buttons (and their programmability), offering only four fire buttons, a four-way hat switch, and a T-grip throttle control. On the other hand, the improved ergonomics, compatibility with CH Products' Flightstick Pro, and an estimated

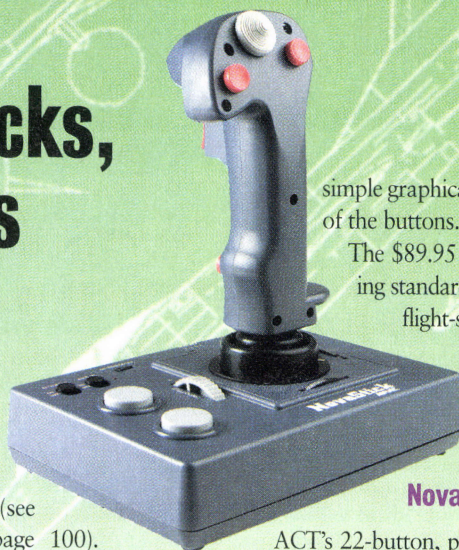
street price of just \$49.95 could make you overlook that tactile shortcoming.

Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Firebird

Gravis' Mac MouseStick enjoyed considerable success, but for the longest time, Mac owners could only gaze longingly at the advanced features of the company's PC sticks. No more.

Gravis' new Firebird for the Mac offers the same ergonomic design as the Thunderbird, with the addition of 21 programmable buttons, including an eight-way hat switch. A



simple graphical interface makes it easy to program each of the buttons.

The \$89.95 unit also includes a connector for attaching standard PC rudder pedals to complete your Mac flight-sim experience. (Advanced Gravis; 800-663-8558)

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

ACT Laboratories NovaStick Max

ACT's 22-button, programmable NovaStick Max looks like a lot of stick for just \$59.95. If you think it sounds too good to be true, you may be right.

The NovaStick Max includes eight fire buttons, two large Street Fighter-type buttons on its base, an eight-way hat switch, a throttle control, and x- and y-axis trim controls in a compact design. You can also program and store four different sets of keyboard commands for your favorite games. Unfortunately, rough action and flimsy construction will have you fearing for the stick's life when the gaming gets hot. (ACT Laboratories; 604-278-3650)

Rating: ★ ★

InterAct Accessories

PC Flight Force Fire Control System

These days, every joystick maker needs to offer some sort of separate throttle/weapons control system. InterAct's version is the PC Flight Force controller.

The controller acts as both a throttle and weapons system, with nine programmable keys containing four program slots for your favorite flight sims. Programming the stick is a snap: you just press the button you want to program and then the corresponding key on your keyboard. However, you can't confirm your settings without starting up the game. And the buttons are relatively small and close together, which could frustrate players with large hands.

Still, the PC Flight Force FCS offers a sturdy, easy way to add some glitz to your games—all for \$59.95. (InterAct Accessories; 410-785-5661; www.Interact-ACC.com.)

Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2



For a look at even newer game controllers, see Scouting Report in Game News on page 12.

TEMPEST 2000
<http://www.Atari.com>



year 25. day 1.

Spotlight

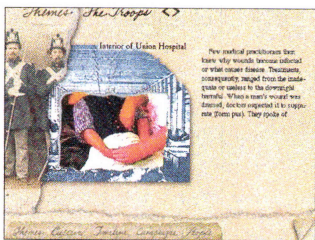
Software

DIGITAL DOCUMENTARY

The Civil War

Platform: Win/Win 95 CD, Mac CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2



Civil War surgery left much to be desired.

American Heritage: The Civil War, created by Byron Preiss Multimedia for Simon & Schuster, packages a Civil War documentary CD-ROM with a bare-bones strategy game that lets you re-enact this pivotal period in American history.

Based on the best-selling book *American Heritage Picture History of the Civil War*, the multimedia documentary shines, addressing such topics as People, Poetry & Music, and Reconstruction. It includes the experiences of women on the homefront, political issues, period music and literature, and the ordeals soldiers faced on the battlefields. You get an hour of live-action video, hundreds of photographs, and 40 minutes of period music. A virtual video host provides commentary as you browse the various sections. A crisp, intuitive (though not consistently stylish) interface and graphical treatment make exploring the title a snap.

Just don't expect the same quality from *The Civil War's* strategy game. Although this disc lets you explore the details of crucial battles and the weapons used in them, it's too stripped down to appeal to anyone but the most avid wargamers. (Simon & Schuster Interactive; 212-698-7000; \$54.95) —Steve Klett

VIRTUAL STARGAZING

The Planets

Platform: Win CD/Win 95

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Have you ever wondered what force propels a comet or how the galaxy was formed? A new astronomy title has answers for your space-probing questions.

Hitchhike across the solar system with **The Planets**, a Scientific American Library release from Simon & Schuster and Byron Priess. This Windows CD-ROM combines more than 60 spectacular videos and animations with the text from the book *Exploring Planetary Worlds*, by David Morrison, chief of the Space Division at NASA Ames Research Center.

Best of all, you can build your own planet, create life, and then set the whole thing into orbit in your own solar system. Dr. Donald Goldsmith, host of the PBS series *The Astronomers*, provides you with tips.

The disc also includes a Planetary Traveler module that lets you view 3-D images of Venus taken by the Magellan satellite, as well as the pictures NASA's Voyager II took of Neptune and Uranus. (Simon & Schuster/Byron Preiss; 800-223-2348; \$54.95) —Suzanne Frear

SLAP SHOT

Inside Hockey 1996

Platform: Win CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Well, the Stanley Cup may have come and gone, but you can relive the 1995–1996 season schedule, plus all the action from the previous year, with **Inside Hockey 1996** from *The Hockey News* and CEDROM-SNi.

The disc includes all the weekly hockey newspaper's feature articles



Create your own planet and solar system in *The Planets*.

from the 1994–1995 season, a compilation of historic hockey moments, and background and stats on every NHL player, team, and coach.

If that's not enough, check out the Stick-ionary—a glossary of hockey terms—and then test your puck know-how with noted pros Jeremy Roenick and Adam Oates in the Trivia Challenge.

Just don't expect anything flashy. Inside Hockey 1996 may be a wealth of frozen pond knowledge, but its presentation could have used a sharper edge. (Electronic Arts; 800-245-4525; \$49.95)

—Steve Klett

STEINBECK'S VISION

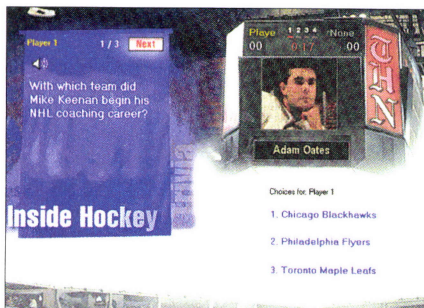
Of Mice and Men CD-ROM

Platform: Win CD, Mac CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

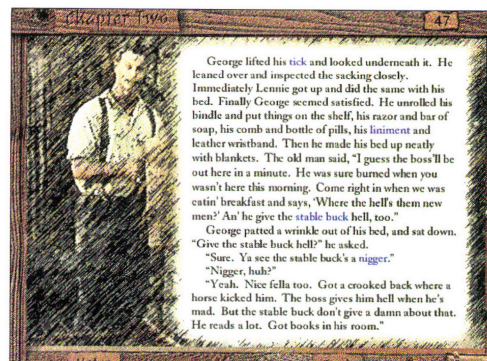
John Steinbeck continues to be a source of fascination to serious readers. Damned in his lifetime by critics for an alleged lack of literary depth, yet celebrated by millions

Test your frozen pond knowledge with Adam Oates.



for his plainly told stories of simple American life, the Nobel laureate's work survives in movies, reprints, songs—and now in multimedia.

Based on Steinbeck's tragic novel about a pair of California Depression ranchhands, **Of Mice and Men**, from Penguin Electronic and



A muted interface and line illustrations frame John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men CD-ROM.

Byron Preiss Multimedia, is the first in a planned John Steinbeck multimedia CD-ROM library.

Here, the author's work gets deep and serious treatment. The novel's text appears hyperlinked and fully illustrated (but you can opt to see it text-only, if you prefer). A simple interface lets you access California maps, annotations, and a selection of scenes from the 1992 movie with Gary Sinise and John Malkovich. A calendar leads you to chapters of Jackson J. Benson's comprehensive biography, *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck, Writer*. You also get exhaustive essays, other scholarly resources, and revealing

video interviews with Benson, Steinbeck's third wife, Elaine, and Steinbeck scholar Robert Morsberger. All the material works together to lend major weight to the disc.

Of Mice and Men does suffer from a few weaknesses, however. The "work roster" of characters from the novel is pleasant enough, but not terribly illuminating. In addition, Bindlestiff's Diary—a fictional account of a California migrant worker—is compromised by a hackneyed, unconvincing audio performance. However, you can easily skip the disc's deficient sections and concentrate instead on the impressive material that fills this captivating tribute to an American literary giant. (Penguin Electronic; 800-253-6476; \$49.95) —Donald St. John

PC POSING

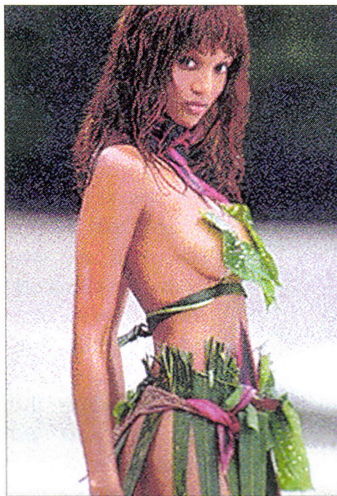
Supermodels In the Rainforest

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★ ★ 1/2

Pouty lips and comely curves under jungle waterfalls. Dark-eyed women slowly rafting down a densely forested Costa Rican river. Lush green fronds shielding the essential parts, just barely. Yep, it must be **Supermodels in the Rainforest**, an enhanced CD from The Right Stuff, a Capital Records label.

This disc has the gauzy, not-



You won't find Tyra Banks's "bikini" at any shopping mall.

quite-sensual feel of softcore movies like *Emmanuelle*. The eight saucy models strike poses and expose hints o' T&A in videos that never quite invite you into the experience. And the developers use the

term "supermodels" rather loosely. While all the models are quite striking, only Tyra Banks really qualifies as "super."

The "enhanced" label refers to music tracks from bands such as Duran Duran, Soul II Soul, and Enigma, whose slick, synth-washed sound magnifies the soft-core feel. Pluses include admirable attention to the plight of the endangered Central American rainforests (though you'll have to withstand some vapid commentary from the models to get all the facts), as well as smooth performance and a straightforward interface. In the end, this sexy trifle awkwardly blends exploitation and political correctness. (The Right Stuff; 310-260-4776; \$29.99)

—Donald St. John

NEW ENHANCED CDS

The Music Box

There seem to be as many approaches to creating an enhanced CD as there are musical artists who have made one. Even so, there's still room for originality.

Take Mike Oldfield's Mac-only release **The Songs of Distant Earth**, for example. The disc features some fabulous eye candy, starting with a detailed opening animation sequence that leads to a nifty puzzle based on his 1973 smash *Tubular Bells*. Solve that, and you get three more video and animation samples. The arresting video for "Let There Be Light" has stunning computer-generated sequences. This is truly multimedia art at its most imaginative. (Reprise Records; 818-846-9000; \$15.98)

Platform: Mac CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Atlantic Records takes a different approach: Its **Spew+** sampler is a digizine of sorts, featuring 11 artists (mostly newcomers such as Collective Soul and Jill Sobule). Partial video snippets mix with interviews

and bios in an over-funky design definitely aimed at Generation Xers. Catch the little man in the disc's game portion, and you get a bonus video of album-rocker Edwin McCain's "Solitude" featuring Hootie and the Blowfish lead singer Darius Rucker. (Atlantic Records; 818-846-9000; \$15.98)

Platform: Win/Mac CD

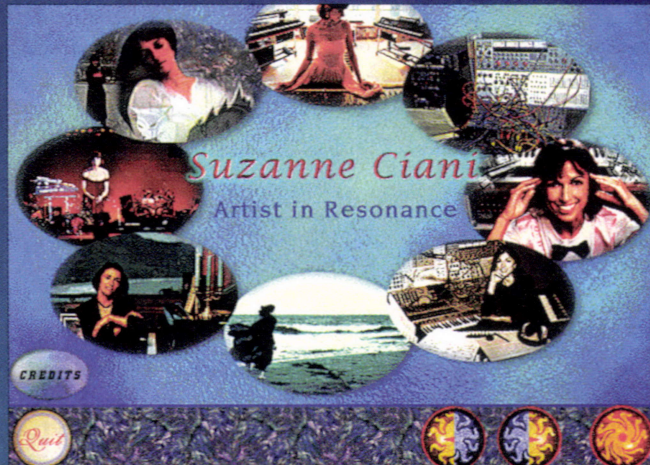
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

New Age pianist Suzanne Ciani uses yet a third technique. **Dream Suite** gets the full "meet the artist" treatment: Ciani's early synthesizer experiments, her commercial jingle work and solo piano albums, a video for "Riding Heaven's Wave (Eulogy for a Surfer)," and a full-length article from the Control CD-ROM magazine. The disc's superb design and content match the lush, romantic music perfectly, making this a money's-worth buy. (Seventh Wave; 800-738-9283; \$10)

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ 1/2

OM Records' samplers, **Spiritual High** and **The Groove Active Collection**, are far more unusual. The former, a colorful collection of ambient music



Suzanne Ciani doesn't skimp on multimedia information in Dream Suite.

artists such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Future Sound of London, features multimedia sections on holistic health, campaigns to free Tibet from Chinese rule, and the musings of Zen philosopher Alan Watts. Groove Active, which features acid jazz bands such as A Tribe Called Quest and Brand New Heavies, gives you some spoken-word "poetry slams," samples of graffiti art, and artist interviews, all in a stark design. The disc's interfaces use tracks from the albums nicely as background; the downside is occasionally dodgy performance, even on a fast Pentium with 16MB of RAM. (OM

Records; 415-247-8800; \$15.98)

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★

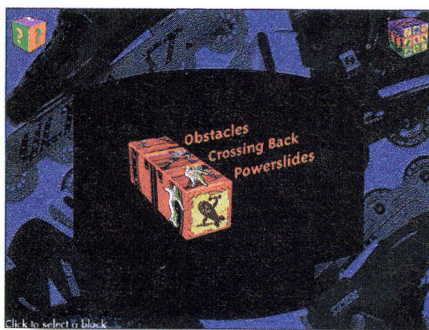
Detroit rockers **Skeleton Crew** take the most conventional route: **pre-historic...dig!** introduces you to the Beatlesque band, lets you play the album's songs, and serves up two videos that, unfortunately, are kinda poorly filmed. Collect the five Crew icons sprinkled throughout the disc to get a better, full-length video of "In Sympathy." (Intersound Records; 404-664-9262; \$15.98)

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★

—Donald St. John

Spotlight



Learn the ups and downs (whoops!) of inline skating with the L3 Interactive Learning Cube.

SKATING ON THIN WHEELS

Real Line

Platform: Win CD

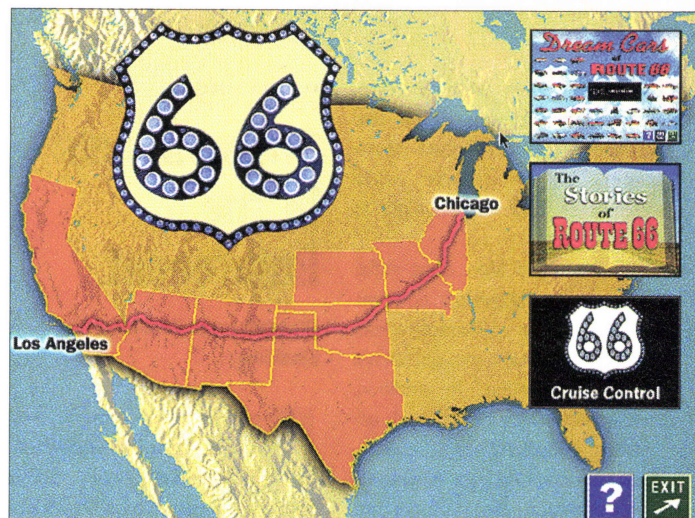
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Put on flashy skates, start rolling, flail, fall on your butt, struggle to your feet...Hey wait! That's learning how to skate in real life. Inline skating on your PC is much less painful. **Real**

Line: An Interactive Learning Cube shows you how to buy inline skates, start skating, turn, stop, and even skate backward. Although there's no substitute for road practice, this disc is full of valuable advice that you can't get just

watching other skaters whiz by.

The CD features experts putting on a dazzling show while it describes in simple terms what they're doing. The various lessons also include video demonstrations and text explanations that you can print out and take along with you. Although advanced skaters may find the disc short on challenging video and long on exasperating detail, beginners and intermediate skaters are sure to learn the stuff that'll get them up and rolling right along. (L3 Interactive; 800-644-2823; \$34.95) —Margaret Lindquist



You'll get limited kicks on this Route 66.

AMERICA'S MAIN STREET

Drivin' Route 66

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★ ★ 1/2

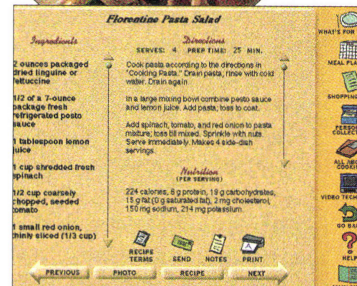
You've heard the song. Maybe you've even seen episodes of the old TV series. But unless you're a real buff of classic cars and even more interested in classic Americana, you can cruise right past **America's Main Street: Drivin' Route 66**.

The Windows and Macintosh CD-ROM, developed by Cambridge Digital Media, lets you follow the famous highway state-by-state all the way from Chicago to L.A., stopping off at 66 pop-culture hot spots along the way for photographic and video glimpses of 38 period cars. You can also go directly to the vintage car section, take a 15-minute slide-show tour, listen to (and read) Route 66 stories, or use the Trip Planner to get tourist information if you want to travel what's left of "America's Main Street," now mostly superseded by the interstate highway system.

It's all good fun and the color-coded maps and Lucinda Lewis's pictures look great. But extended load times and a too-leisurely pace will make you think you're stuck behind a logging truck, while the amateurish narration evokes a slow day on CB channel 29. The music quickly becomes repetitive—and you don't even get the famous song. What Drivin' Route 66 really needs is a shot of high-octane to make it feel more like a high-spirited joyride than a class field trip.

(Creative Multimedia; 800-262-7668; \$19.95)

—Fredric Paul



Better Homes and Gardens' Cooking For Today Pasta presents recipes ranging from slimming to sumptuous.

QUICK MEALS

Cooking For Today

Platform: Win/Mac CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

In most American households, the person who cooks dinner also has a full-time job. To help ease the stress, **Better Homes and Gardens' Cooking For Today Cookbook series** packages a 140-plus-page cookbook with a well-designed CD-ROM that lets you select recipes by preparation time. More than half of the recipes take less than half an hour to

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Take On The Best.
www.ef2000.com/game



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prepare, and the discs also sort dishes by ingredients, so you can use what's already on hand.

If you *have* to go shopping, the discs quickly create a shopping list—automatically calculating the proper quantities for the desired number of servings. If health is your key concern, you can also select recipes by the

amount of fat, saturated fat, sodium, calories, carbohydrates, cholesterol, and potassium they contain.

Each of the four titles—Chicken, Stir Fry, Vegetarian, and my favorite, Pasta—contains more than 60 recipes (each cookbook also features 60-plus recipes, not all of which are identical to the disc's).

ONE CITY, MANY FAITHS

Two Trips to Jerusalem

Jerusalem: An Interactive Pilgrimage
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

Pathways Through Jerusalem
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

For longer than anyone can remember, the world's major religions have been fighting over the city of Jerusalem. Now, a pair of CD-ROM titles compete to capture the city in multimedia (see our preview, *Electronic*

the graphics—especially maps of Jerusalem throughout history—are excellent, but the section on Christ uses illustrations seemingly lifted from a 1950s textbook. (Simon & Schuster Interactive; 800-223-2348; \$39.95)

Future Vision Multimedia's **Pathways Through Jerusalem** takes a more multicultural view. You'll find interesting interactive timelines, hyperlinked databases, and multimedia maps covering the city, its history, and its significance. The comprehensive two-disc title also presents nine guided video tours throughout the city. Your guides include historical figures King David and Herod the Great, as well as modern Christian, Jewish, and Muslim residents. Each covers the same ground, but views it from a unique historical and cultural

In *Pathways Through Jerusalem*, actors playing key figures offer unique perspectives.



Jerusalem: An Interactive Pilgrimage is comprehensive but a bit stodgy.

Entertainment, August 1995, page 14).

The two discs take wildly different approaches. The relatively straightforward **Jerusalem: An Interactive Pilgrimage to the Holy City** from Simon & Schuster adopts a predominantly Christian perspective, concentrating on both Christ's story and the city itself. The music and much of

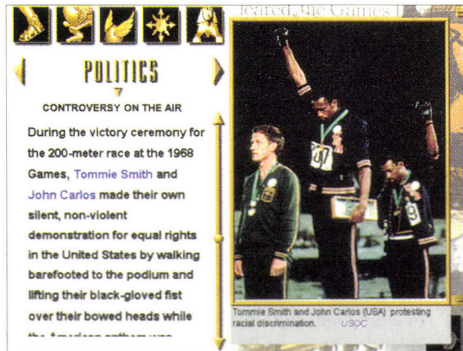
perspective. The guides' acting talent ranges from sincere to campy, but the experience captures the essence of an actual visit to the Holy City and reflects how different groups regard this important place. (Future Vision Multimedia; 516-482-0088; \$69.95)

—Fredric Paul

You get a mouth-watering picture of each dish, a complete glossary of terms, an explanation of utensils that includes lovely pencil sketches of the common cooking implements, a chart for ingredient substitutions, and conversion and cooking-time charts for many types of food.

On the multimedia side, more than 120 five-to-ten-second video clips attempt to demonstrate a wide variety of cooking techniques, but they're just too short to offer much help. And if you're in a really big hurry, you should know that the title ran a bit slow on our Mac Centris 610 with 16MB of RAM. However, it ran fine on a Pentium 120 PC with 16MB of RAM. (Multicom; 800-850-7272; street price \$19.99 each)

—Ann M. Marcus



The Olympics have always blended sport and politics, as Tommie Smith and John Carlos demonstrated in 1968.

BRONZE MEDAL

Olympic Gold

Platform: Win CD
Rating: ★ ★ ★ 1/2

As the 1996 Olympics gear up in Atlanta, we're already beginning to see multimedia and games developers' attempts to cash in

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"It's the ultimate

combat sim I've experienced... nothing compares."

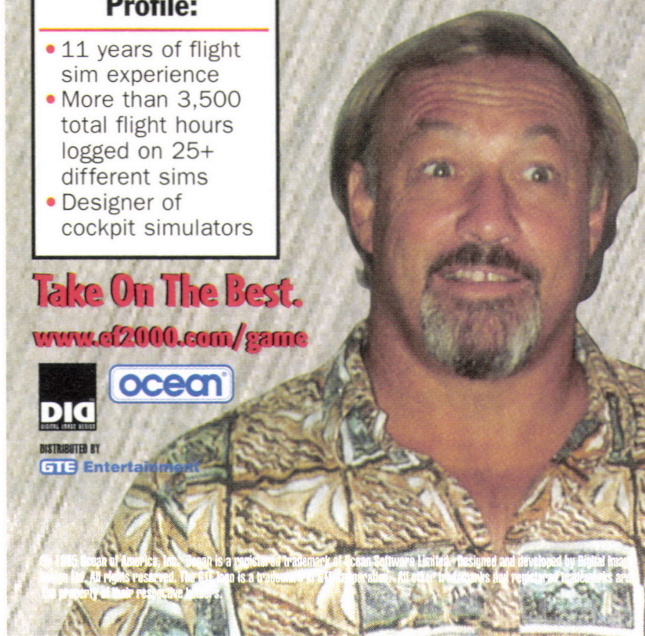
—SurfDog, Hanalei, HI
surfdog@aloha.net



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Spotlight

on the growing fever. **Olympic Gold: A 100 Year History of the Summer Olympic Games**, developed by S.E.A. Multimedia, will bring you up to date and get you ready for this summer's excitement.

Multimedia guided tours of all the Games since 1896, pointless but clever 3-D animations of each event's rules, and 2,000 photos of key moments all help bring the pageantry of the Olympics to life. However, complete coverage of the Games would be far too extensive to fit on a single CD-ROM. The disc's 100 video clips, for example, include a bit on the Dream Team, but nothing on the controversial plays that led to America's first-ever Olympics basketball loss in Munich in 1972.

Olympic Gold does better with reference detail. You get all the medal winners, medal counts, world records, text-and-photo



This is all the graphics you will see in Leonard Maltin's 1996 Movie & Video Guide.

profiles of 100 Olympic legends, and a pretty-darn-tough trivia game. A bit more multimedia pizzazz—such as ambient sounds or audio clips—might have made the project seem less like a dressed-up database.

In the end, Olympic Gold resembles an obscure Olympic event like archery or synchronized swimming—fun while it's happening, but

easy to forget. (Discovery Channel Multimedia; 800-678-3343; \$39.95)

—Fredric Paul

TWO HOLES IN ONE

Hitting the Links

Golf Tips:
Breaking 100
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★★★★★

Sportware Golf
Platform: Win/Mac CD
Rating: ★★★★★

If you're a duffer, odds are the approaching spring season has you itching to hit the links. While weather conditions may not allow it yet, how about the next best thing: Use your computer to brush up on your game.

Golf Tips: Breaking 100 from DiaMAR Interactive and **Sportware Golf: The Ultimate Golfer's Companion** from HarperCollins Interactive can both help get the rust off your game.

Each disc includes a bevy of instructional tips that cover every aspect of the game, from the proper club grip to getting over first-tee jitters. Both also feature video clips of proper swing techniques and audio commentary from seasoned golf pros. **Golf Tips** showcases instruction from pros at the David Leadbetter Golf Academy while **Sportware Golf** features instruction from Jim

BUY THE BOOK

Leonard Maltin's Movie Guide

Platform: Mac
Rating: ★★

Leonard Maltin's 1996 **Movie & Video Guide** isn't much to look at. After you spend about 20 minutes installing the floppy-based program, you won't get any cool graphics or video and audio clips. What you will get is an amazing 19,000 reviews and biographies.

This 18MB monster comes



Either of these great titles will help Fore!-tify your game.

McLean, the 1994 PGA Teacher of the Year.

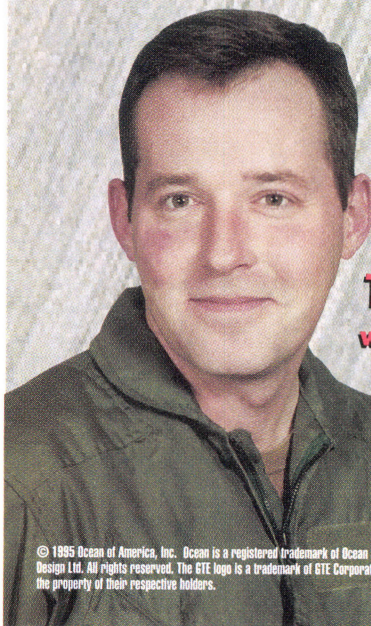
Each title's sharp, attractive graphics and intuitive interface let you take its lessons in whatever order you like, without getting lost along the way. The biggest difference between them—other than price—is in the little extras each brings to the fairway. **Golf Tips** lets you test what you've learned on a virtual Championship Par 5 hole designed to help you make proper club selections on a real course. **Sportware Golf** features a regional golf tour that provides information on greens fees, room rates, and booking information for top courses around the country. Your decision should depend upon which information you prefer and how much you're willing to spend. Better still, buy 'em both. (DiaMAR Interactive, 800-234-2627, \$59.95; HarperCollins Interactive, 800-424-6234, \$39.95)

—Steve Klett

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ABRACADABRA

Presto Change-o

Magic: An Insider's View

Platform: Mac/Win CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★

Inside Magic

Platform: Mac/Win CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★

Want to conjure up a little amazement among your friends? This pair of titles will do the trick.

Magic: An Insider's View, hosted by Harry Anderson (of *Night Court* fame) gives you a behind-the-scenes look at how magicians do their thing; you can watch each of the 14



Harry Anderson guides you through more than a dozen magic tricks in **Magic: An Insider's View**.

tricks from 3 different camera angles simultaneously. Each illusion requires only common household props, such as rubberbands, playing cards, and pencils, so you'll have no problem getting your bag of tricks together.

The title's interface is vivid, straightforward, and loaded with hot spots. Click on icons at the bottom of the main menu for interesting quotes, facts, and trivia. Also, check out the magic gallery to read about the colorful history and folklore of magic. If you



Master magician Peter Grand performs some amazing tricks in **Inside Magic**.

Although **Inside's** interface is less interesting than **Magic: An Insider's View's**, it's

easy to navigate and packed with more than three times as many tricks. Each trick can be performed or revealed at three levels of speed—full, half, and slo-mo (for beginners).

You also get videos of Grand performing routines, which are helpful in showing you how to string together several tricks into a performance. Unfortunately, the props he uses are often so small on the screen that you can only guess at what he's actually doing. (Houghton-Mifflin Interactive; 800-225-3362; \$59.95) —Suzanne Frear

For more magic with a lot less personality, there's **Inside Magic** from Houghton-Mifflin. The title is hosted by Peter Grand, a talented but dull master magician.

Learn more than 50 tricks using coins, cards, and other household items. As a bonus, this comprehensive title includes a deck of cards and other items to use in your routines.

bundled with a paperback copy of the guide—good thing, since it takes longer to use the program's search mode than it does to look up an item in the book. Also, you can't stop a search once it's begun, and there aren't any hyperlinks to make it easier to jump between entries.

If you want a thorough movie guide and don't have a CD-ROM drive, this title will probably work for you. But you might be better off just buying the book. (Penguin Entertainment; 800-253-6476; \$39.95)

—Suzanne Frear

templates and 1,800 pieces of animated clip art, plus a variety of background images, sounds, music, and movie clips, you can create cards for any occasion. And you can add a



Create sweet (or sappy) interactive Valentines with **Studio M**.

personal touch by incorporating your own scanned photos, graphics, or sound clips.

Studio M's click-and-drag interface is easy to use, and the included "How-to" guide walks you through every step of the process, from selecting and modifying art to adding and enhancing sound. Of course, to take full advantage of Studio M's creativity tools, you'll need a modem, scanner, color printer, microphone—and a good imagination. (Gold Disk; 800-982-9888; \$49.95)

—Suzanne Frear

HOME CARD FACTORY

Studio M

Platform: Win CD

Rating: ★ ★ ★

Tired of the same old Valentine's Day cards? Create your own interactive cards with **Studio M** from Gold Disk and send them via e-mail or floppy disk. Or you can print out your cards and mail them the conventional way.

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Spotlight

Hardware

BIG BLUE IS BACK

IBM Aptiva A50

Platform: PC

Rating: ★★★★★

Once upon a time, the letters IBM were synonymous with the letters PC. Those days are long gone, as Big Blue has been eclipsed by companies cloning and improving on its original design. But while IBM may no longer dominate the PC market, its new **Aptiva A50** has just about everything you could want in an entertainment computer, plus a bunch of stuff you don't know you want 'til you get it.

In addition to a screaming-fast 150MHz Pentium processor, you get 16MB RAM, 1MB of video RAM on the motherboard, a roomy 1.6GB hard drive, and a fast 6X CD-ROM drive. The Aptiva's proprietary MWave card combines a 28.8Kbps

modem for speedy Internet surfing with wavetable sound, including digital signal processing (DSP). The DSP chip also handles the sound when playing MPEG video clips, yielding better performance than pure software MPEG. There's even a microphone and IBM's excellent voice recognition and control software. A pair of surprisingly decent speakers completes the package.

To get you started, IBM ships the A50 with such games as *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*, *Cyberia*, and *Endorfun*. A special MPEG bonus pack adds *Silent Steel* and a handful of multimedia titles.

So how does it all work? Great. The Aptiva's blistering performance makes short work of even the most demanding titles, reducing load delays and enhancing the entertainment experience.

The hardware comes packed in a minitower case with a vertical

sliding door to hide the drive bays. Unfortunately, the door just gets in the way, and the unit's bizarre handle makes it hard to reach the floppy drive from above. Also, IBM may still expect you to have an entire staff of computer experts at your beck and call. The system does come with the Aptiva Windows shell, but the techy documentation

and setup procedures aren't totally consumer-friendly.

Other things haven't changed, either: IBM still isn't a bargain brand. The A50 costs a hefty \$3,199 and the slick 17-inch monitor adds another \$879. Not cheap—not by a long shot—but if you can afford it, you'll love it. (IBM; 800-426-2968; \$4,078) —Fredric Paul



IBM's Aptiva A50 has just about everything you want in a PC.

RODENTS WITHOUT A CAUSE

Modern Mice

Media Mouse

Platform: PC

Rating: ★★

The Wireless Mouse

Platform: PC

Rating: ★★★★★

Star-Track

Platform: PC

Rating: ★★ ★ 1/2

Seems mice makers are getting a bit desperate these days. Now that a mouse comes standard with just about every multimedia computer, the controller people have to scramble just to dream up something new.

Media Mouse, for example, is basically a standard mouse packaged with *Melody Mouse* and *Win Cursor* software. It lets you change the shape of your cursor and assign silly sounds to mouse movements. Cursor-changing programs, however, are readily

available as shareware, and the mouse's music quickly becomes annoying. Bundling three CD-ROMs in the package (*MegaRace*, *The Greatest Paper Airplanes*, and *Crystal Caliburn Pinball*) is nice, but unrelated. But if you need a new mouse, consider the **Media Mouse**, which is expected to sell for less than \$40. (Media Depot; 800-633-3768; \$69)

The Wireless Mouse, on the other hand, replaces the cord linking your computer to your mouse with a cord linking your computer to a radio-frequency receiver. The setup works fine, as long as the mouse is within about three feet of the receiver. But if you're gonna be that close, you might as well use a regular mouse. (Mitsumi; 800-648-7864; \$49.95)

Not strictly a mouse, the **Star-Track** actually has something worthwhile to offer. Mixing several genres of controllers into a

The Wireless Mouse has a holder.



unique new pointing device, this infrared wireless trackball is effective from up to 25 feet, and its pistol-like grip fits comfortably in either hand.

You roll the tiny ball—equipped with a patented “braking mechanism” for precise control—with your thumb, and use your forefinger to squeeze the button. Best of all, it comes with a built-in battery recharger and a simple A/B switch that lets you opt to use your regular mouse whenever you want.

That's important, because though it feels like you ought to be able to point the entire unit to move the cursor, that doesn't work. And you may find the **Star-Track** frustrating to use with highly interactive multimedia titles or games. (Zen Technology International; 800-722-7748; \$79.95)

—Fredric Paul

Star-Track is cool, but it isn't really “point and click.”



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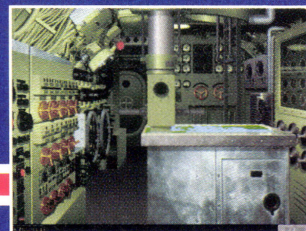
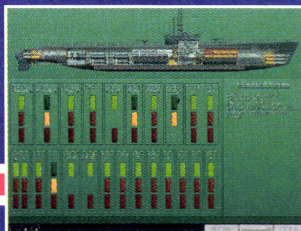
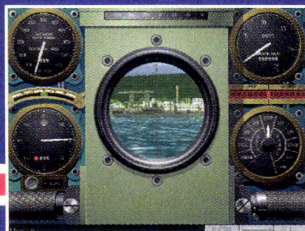
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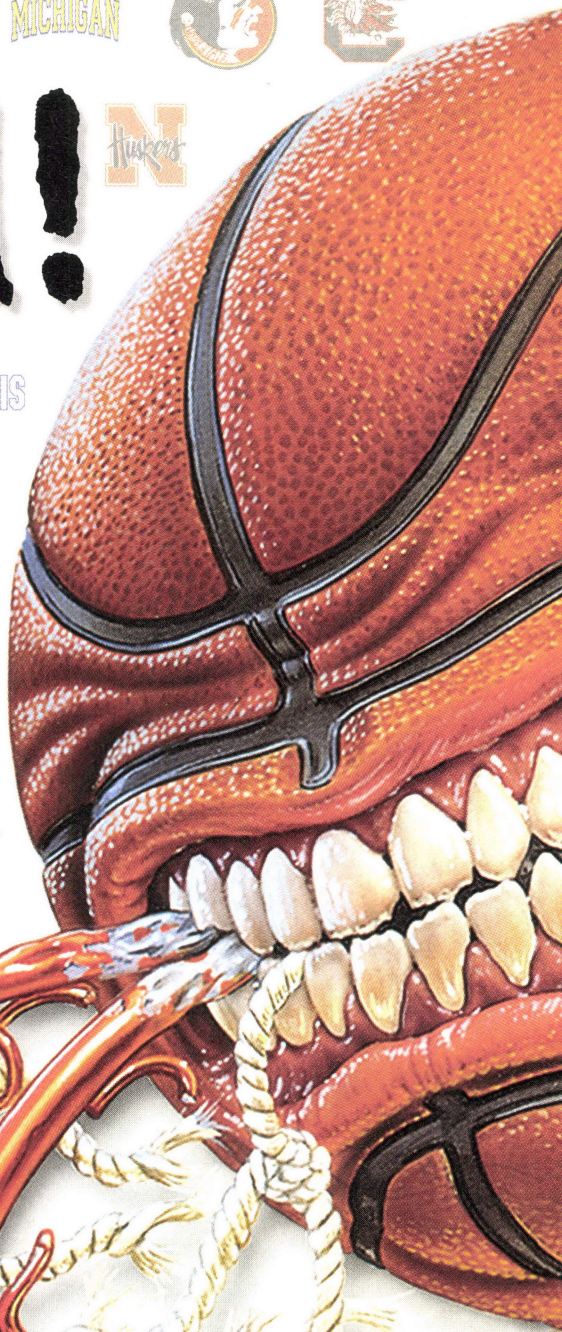


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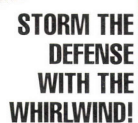
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A Better Browser?

New World Wide Web browsers—those bland-looking little programs that turn raw Web code into the pretty pages we love so much—just keep cropping up. Pretty soon you may get a browser packaged right along with your breakfast cereal.

Question is, do you really have to use the Web browser that came with that free trial offer for XYZ Internet Service Provider, Inc.? Did you ever wonder if maybe, just maybe, there was a better browser out there?

To give you an idea of your options, *PC Entertainment* looked at a half-dozen alternative Web browsers that will work with virtually any Internet service provider. Just don't expect vast differences in features or performance. Almost every browser does the same thing—convert Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) files into those fun pages we can't seem to get enough of. Most of these browsers run under Microsoft Windows, but some offer Mac, UNIX, or OS/2 versions as well. Even better, you can purchase all of them for around \$30 or less.

Guess what? You don't even have to take our word for it. We'll also tell you where to download sample versions of the browsers so you can try them for yourself.

Netscape Navigator

Platforms: Win 3.1, Win 95, Mac, UNIX

<http://home.mcom.com/comprod/mirror/>

Netscape is the 500-pound gorilla of the Web browser market. Studies indicate that some 70 percent of all Web accesses are made using a Netscape browser, and the Silicon Valley wunder-

co doesn't just follow industry guidelines, it sets them. Add to that Netscape's practice of freely distributing updated and beta versions of its browsers, plus the fact that most browser add-ins—such as Macromedia's Shockwave multimedia player—are initially built for Navigator, and you've got a serious juggernaut on your hands.

ing Java- and HTML 3.0-capable browsers for public consumption before either standard had been set in stone. And Navigator covers the range of users—from Mac to PC to UNIX—equally well, so no one need feel left out.

Surprisingly, though, while Navigator may be the early adopter's browser of choice, it may

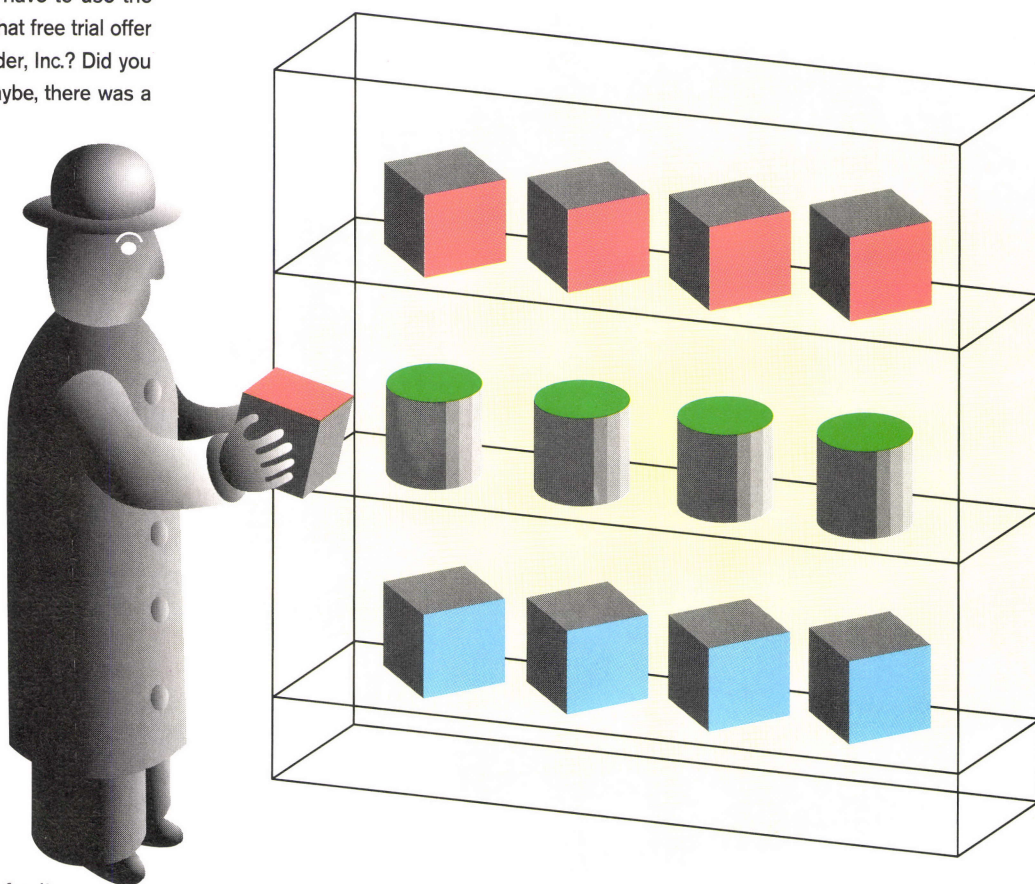


ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY LUKBAN

Netscape (originally called Mosaic Communications) opened the Web to everyone by being one of the first companies to create a commercial-quality browser suitable for both individuals and large corporations. But is it the best browser? That depends on your definition. If you're the type who likes to constantly live on the bleeding edge and try out every new Web feature as soon as the first test page goes live, Netscape is for you. The company was supply-

not be the best bet for average users. For instance, organizing Navigator bookmarks remains a chore. And, as of this writing, the Navigator 2.0 beta doesn't even include basic drag-and-drop capabilities (though Netscape promises them shortly).

Of course, you really can't go too wrong with Navigator. It's here for the long haul, and that may not be the case for some of the other browsers.

Sun Microsystems' HotJava

Platforms: Windows 95 and Solaris, with Macintosh later this year

<http://java.sun.com/hotjava.html>

Sun's Java programming language generates a lot of hype and excitement, for good reason. Java can take the static, flat, text-picture-and-sound Web and turn it into an interactive environment.

How? The Java Internet-aware programming language lets developers build "applets" and then send them along the Web to your PC. Once these applets activate, they can do all sorts of things, from displaying a rotating 3-D company logo to walking you through a subscription form to showing off the latest merchandise in an online catalog.

Of course, you need a Java-aware browser to take advantage of it. HotJava is not only Java-capable, it was actually written in Java. Unlike conventional browsers, which do most of the work decoding various bits of Webware such as images and HTML, HotJava simply acts as a common running ground for Java applets. Some of those applets handle the basics, like decoding HTML and displaying GIFs, but others can be much more advanced and interesting. Java is also designed to run on HotJava regardless of the computer or operating system.

Java could have a big future, and the HotJava browser may play a big part in it. But for now, few people use HotJava for anything other than experimental purposes. Also, keep in mind that most other browser makers will add Java-compliant capabilities to their products as soon as possible, so you may not have to change your browser to enjoy Java's power.

Microsoft Internet Explorer

Platforms: Win 95, with Win 3.1 and Macintosh later this year

<http://www.microsoft.com>

In most cases, when Microsoft targets a software niche, it's only a matter of time before the Redmond giant begins to dominate the field. That hasn't happened in the Web browser market yet, but it isn't for lack of effort on Microsoft's part.

Microsoft's Internet Explorer takes advantage of its family ties to Windows 95 to provide

fast, 32-bit performance and a familiar interface full of tool bars and drag-and-drop features similar to those in other Microsoft applications. Plus, if you install Windows 95, the operating system offers to add Internet Explorer at the same time, complete with a convenient Web link via the Microsoft Network.

Taking a cue from Netscape, Microsoft also offers constantly updated—and free—betas of new versions, so cutting-edge users can try out new features. For example, Microsoft recently offered a free beta of a VRML add-in that lets you view three-dimensional Web pages.

Indeed, Internet Explorer suffers from only a couple of deficiencies: It's limited to Windows 95 for now—expect Windows 3.1 and Mac versions soon—and it's from Microsoft, which automatically turns off many members of Web society. But for beginners seeking a quick and easy way to turn their Windows 95 machine into a Web crawler, Internet Explorer is hard to beat.

Spry Mosaic

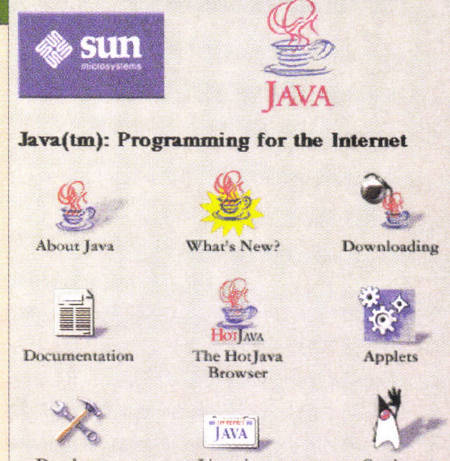
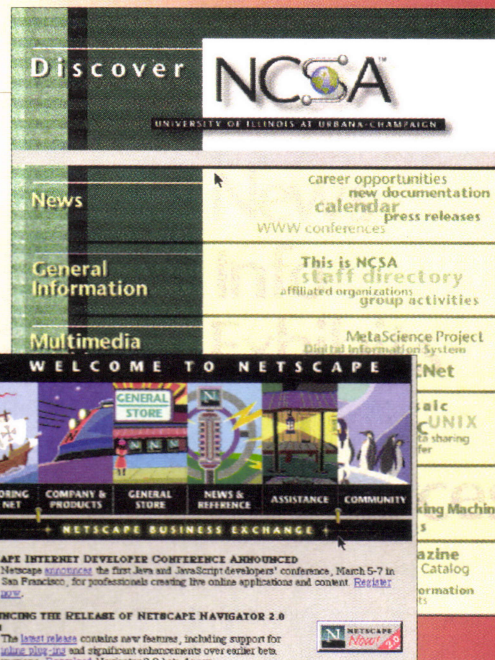
Platforms: Win 3.1, Win 95

<http://www.spry.com>

In the guise of Internet in a Box, Spry Mosaic found its way onto thousands of Windows desktops during the past couple of years. Things really took off, however, when CompuServe acquired Spry and began offering all its customers Web access via the Spry browser.

The latest version for Windows 95 adds new features, including support for HTML 3.0, secure electronic transactions, and an "Internet Wizard" to help new users get around. If Spry has any serious failing, it's a dependence upon retail sales of the product to garner new users. Instead of offering free trial or shareware versions like the competition does, Spry tries to draw in customers by offering everything you need for full Internet access in one slick \$70 package, including the browser, printed documentation, and info on Web service providers. If you don't need all the extras, you can buy just Mosaic in a Box for around \$10. The strategy has worked to some extent, but some recent statistics show that Spry Mosaic may

continued on page 103



Wanted: A Good \$500 Computer

Most people concede that computers can be valuable for work, education, and, of course, play. But, love 'em or hate 'em, today's personal computers face a pair of serious problems: high price tags followed within months by a horrifyingly quick obsolescence. As

the Internet for less than \$500. Soon after, computer-hardware companies such as IBM, Sun Microsystems, Compaqs, and Wyse Technology jumped on the bandwagon to make buying a so-called "Network Computer" (NC) or "Interpersonal Computer"—depending on whose marketing department you listen to—no more painful than getting a new TV.

For starters, forget about the latest Pentiums. To keep prices low, these cheap computers will have to get a new heart, probably an inexpensive non-Intel microprocessor with built-in sound, video, and maybe even networking.

Of course, that's not all that's missing. These low-cost computers won't have disk drives—hard, floppy, CD-ROM, or otherwise. Instead, you'll hook the

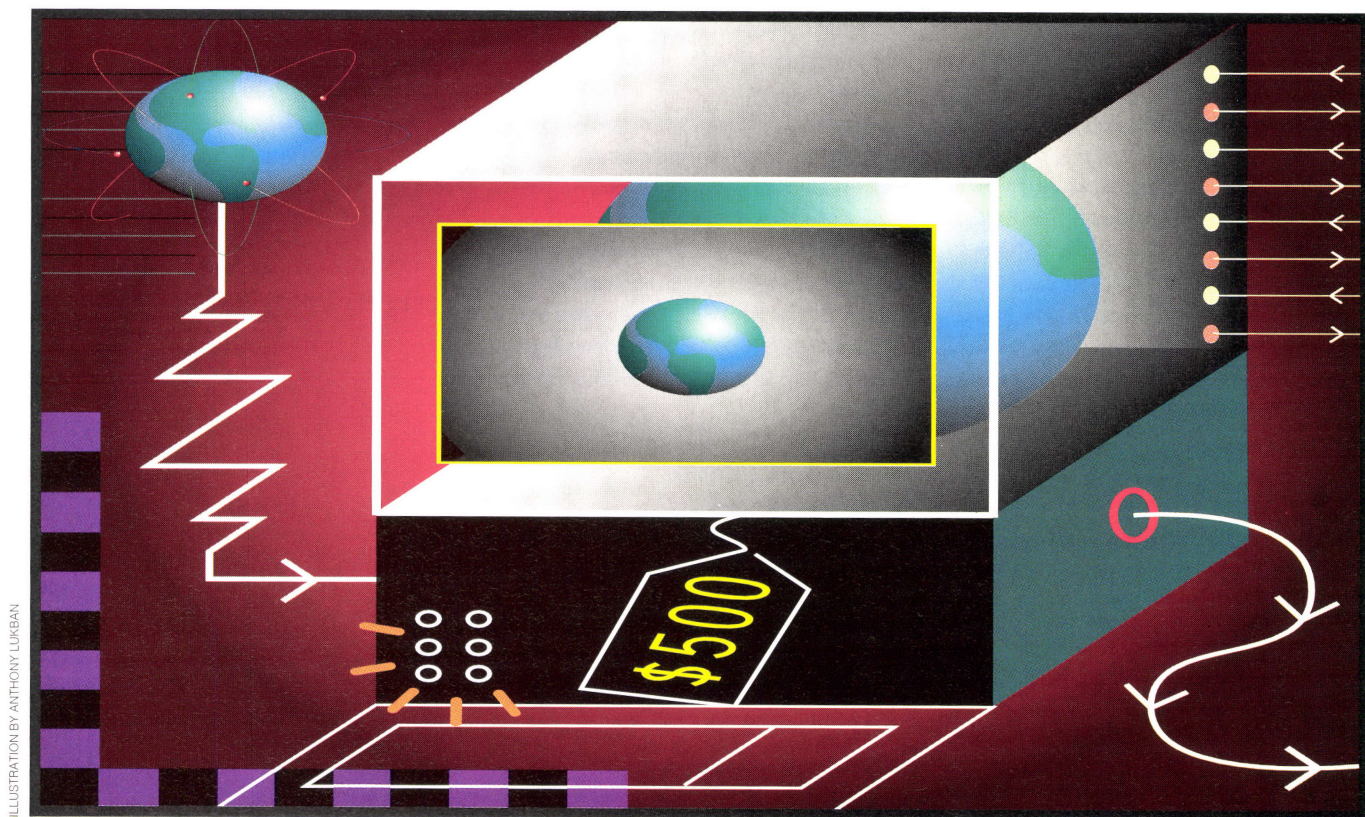


ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY LUKBAN

a result, feeding a PC fetish can drain your wallet faster than just about any hobby this side of yacht racing. So it seems reasonable that if someone could build a useful, fully equipped \$500 computer, the world would beat a path to his or her door—and then beat the door down.

That's pretty much what happened when Larry Ellison, CEO of database software giant Oracle Corp., announced that his company had built prototypes of high-performance computers that would give customers access to all kinds of software and

Even better—as far as these NC-hyping companies are concerned—the thrifty systems wouldn't depend on any Microsoft or Intel products, a situation that a lot of these giants' high-tech competition would love to make a reality.

From all the articles in all the business and computer magazines, you might get the impression that these new boxes are primed to succeed. But just what would you get for your 500 bucks? Well, push those visions of Pentium-based, Windows 95-powered, gig-driven, RAM-ready power boxes out of your head. Instead, we're talking about the computer equivalent of a Geo Metro.

mightily mite up to the Internet and download your game, multimedia title, or business application into the system's onboard memory (probably a mere 4MB worth). Want to save a game in progress or a document you've worked on? Upload it to your personal storage space on the Net, where it will be waiting the next time you need it.

But what if you want to keep some things closer to home? For instance, maybe you don't feel comfortable storing all your personal financial data on some unseen supercomputer a thousand miles away. Well, some of these new systems will have slots for "flash RAM," a hardware card that can store

and retrieve a few megabytes of data. You could tuck these cards into your pocket, safe from bored cyberjunksies hacking the Net for fun and profit.

These new boxes won't exactly wow you with their graphical capabilities, either. They'll likely come with either inexpensive monochrome monitors or no display at all. Instead, you'll hook up your NC to your TV, which delivers graphics that are a far cry from Super VGA-quality.

And what about networking? Obviously, a computer with no local storage is going to be pretty dependent on its Net connection. Exactly what form that connection will take remains unclear, though the companies hyping the new systems like to talk about cable modems, ISDN, and Ethernet—not plain old 14.4 or 28.8Kbps hook-ups. Of course, none of those fancy new technologies is widely available to consumers yet.

Even assuming fast Net connections, the big question is, "What will you be able to do with these new toys?" If you believe the hype, the answer is "Anything you want." But hype won't run a hot game in 4MB of RAM. In fact, none of your existing PC software would run on these new machines unless its creators build new, NC-ready versions.

Instead, proponents of the new computers foresee a future in which a small, simple operating system (can you say "Goodbye Windows 95?") runs applications built with Sun's network-friendly Java programming language. World Wide Web browsers and e-mail services would likely come first, followed by more advanced game and multimedia programs as developers learn how to deal with limited local memory and complex distributed architectures.

Beginning to sound like pie in the sky? Well, a few slices are already on the table. Wyse Technology has recently introduced just such a machine, called the Winterm 2000, that lists for around \$500. IBM and others will follow in the coming months. These units are hardly game-capable, however, and are primarily targeted at businesses looking for a cheap and easy way to give employees access to corporate data, e-mail, and other Internet services.

The consumer push can't really start until several issues get ironed out, including who's going to run the central service providing the storage and Net access, and what infrastructure—phone lines, television cable, or other—will provide the high-speed connections. That's still months or years away from being settled.

It's also unclear whether regular people are ready for network computing. Part of the fun of owning a PC is the ability to configure it as you see fit and run whatever software you happen to pick up off the shelves. If you've ever been annoyed at a lost America Online or CompuServe connection, imagine your reaction if it crashed your whole computer, right before you finished that last MechWarrior mission that you'd been playing for two hours. ■

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TECH SHOP, continued from page 101
control only about six to eight percent of the browser market.

Quarterdeck Mosaic

Platforms: Win 95, Mac

<http://www.qdeck.com/qdeck/products/QMosaic/>

Long known for its high-quality memory management products, Quarterdeck jumped onto the Web bandwagon last year with a suite of tools designed to let people easily build and browse Web pages. Quarterdeck's Mosaic took the standard Mosaic interface and expanded on it, making it faster and easier. The new Mosaic includes a multitasking engine that lets you display multiple Web pages at once. You also get an innovative folder system for organizing all your favorite Web sites. Quarterdeck Mosaic even includes some integrated web search capabilities.

On the negative side, Quarterdeck has not been as free with betas as competitors like Netscape and Microsoft. As a result, you may have to wait longer to get at new features than you would using Internet Explorer or Navigator.

That approach may threaten the large-scale success of Quarterdeck Mosaic. While the company is delivering a good product, it lacks the history of Netscape, the money of Microsoft, or the clout of CompuServe/Spry Mosaic.

NCSA Mosaic

Platforms: Win 3.1, Mac, X Windows

<http://www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/Mosaic/NCSAMosaicHome.html>

Ah, here's where it all began, at The National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University of Illinois. In 1993, its Mosaic graphical Web browser gave birth to an online revolution—and almost all the other browsers available today, including Netscape's Navigator.

NCSA Mosaic is a "freeware" application, meaning anyone can download, use, and distribute it free of charge. You can even download the "source code" of the browser to see how it works under the covers (if you're a C-language programmer, that is).

Though the NCSA still updates its Mosaic, the product is more valuable as a historical artifact and learning tool for budding Web programmers than anything else. Only a tiny percentage of today's Web cruisers use it, and that number is shrinking as the mass market discovers bigger-name commercial browsers. ■



S.O.S.

Move Those Magnets

When I move my speakers close to my computer screen, things get kind of blurry and colorful around the edges. Is there anything I can do to keep this from happening? Is it hurting anything to leave the speakers there?

Anonymous

Do you like your computer? Do you want your computer to like you? Then GET THOSE SPEAKERS AWAY FROM IT!

Sorry about that. I hate resorting to abusive capitalization, but you are subjecting your poor PC to the hazards of magnetic leakage. Speakers depend on powerful magnets to make their sounds, and magnets are bad news around computer screens, hard drives, and floppy drives—all of which use magnetism to store or display data.

Those pretty rainbow lines gathering around the edge of your screen indicate that your speakers are not properly magnetically shielded. Unshielded or poorly shielded speakers can do more than annoy your eyes; they can cause permanent damage to your computer monitor, and even destroy data on floppy and hard disks.

Do yourself a favor: Attach those old noise makers to your stereo system and head on down to the nearest computer or home electronics store to pick up a pair of good-quality, magnetically shielded speakers. Your computer will thank you for it.

VESA Shopping

I just bought Druid: Daemons of the Mind after seeing your Guided Tour. However, a blank screen comes up whenever I enter the game because it requires a VESA

1.2-compliant driver to work.

Can you give me a list of places where I can download this driver for a Trident video card? Thanks.

Robert Hsu
via Internet

Looks like you're the latest winner in the game of Standards Roulette! VESA 1.2 refers to a video display standard developed by members of the Video Electronics Standards Association, or VESA. The organization,

Magnetic mayhem,
VESA versions,
cable questions,
and missing memory.

at 415-691-9211 or check the Trident BBS at 415-691-1016.

Just to give you something else to worry about: If you find out that your card already supports VESA 1.2, you're going to have to look elsewhere for the problem. Be prepared to call Sir-Tech's tech support department. More than a few people have had trouble running Druid, so the staff'll probably have a few possible solutions for you.

Doubling Up With Null Modems

I'm thinking about getting another computer for games. My current system is a 486DX4/100. I've heard a bit about null modems, but nothing in depth. What exactly are null modems, and how do they work?

Brendon Rapp
via Internet

Ohhhhh. So you want to be one of those people who can play network games at home, eh?

A null modem cable is one of the simplest ways to connect two computers for head-to-head action. Basically, the device is a standard serial cable (like the kind you would use to attach an external modem) with the transmission pin from one side attached to the reception wire on the other, and vice versa. With this type of cable (and game software that supports it) you can connect two computers directly.

You do face some limitations, however. You can hook up only two computers using a null modem cable, so forget about four- or eight-player network games. Also, some multiplayer games still don't support these connections. Make sure the titles you want to play offer null modem, or "serial," connections. Many of today's best games—including such perennial favorites as Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness and Doom II—do.

continued on page 106

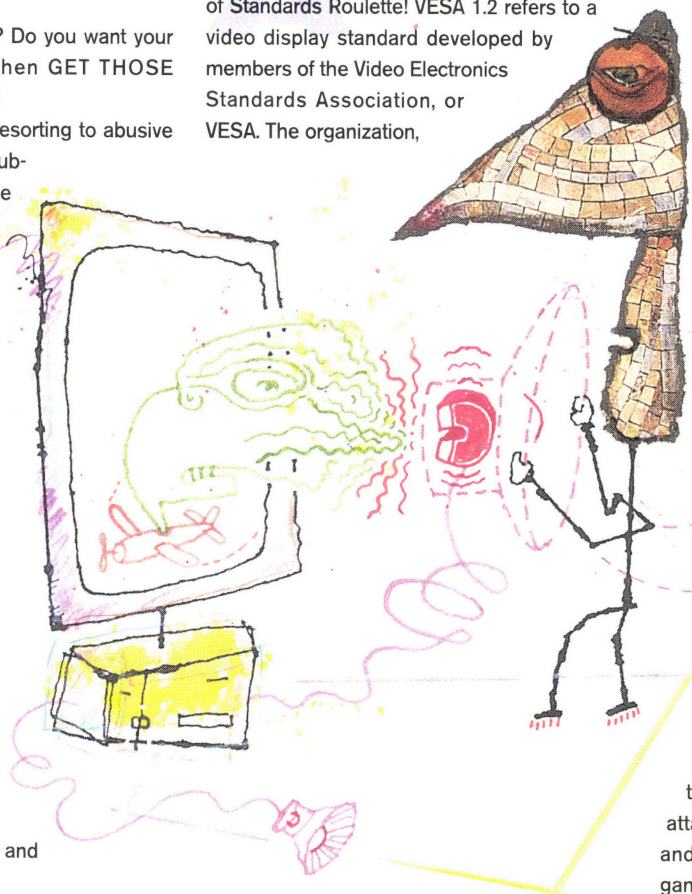
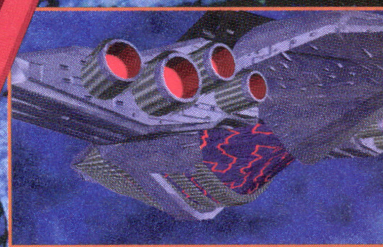
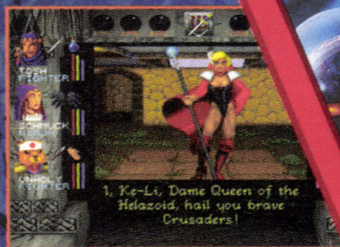


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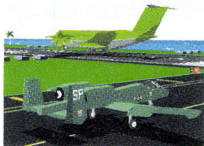


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TECH SHOP, continued from page 104

Making More Memory

About two weeks ago I bought the demo version of Stonekeep. It won't run because it says I don't have enough extended memory. My computer has the 8MB of RAM the game's box says it requires. Is there a way to free up more extended memory without buying anything? If not, what should I buy?

Zach Rhonheimer
via Internet

Someday, in a bright, fun-filled future, the numbers on the side of computer game boxes may actually mean what they say. Sadly, that isn't always the case today.

While you may have the 8MB the game says it needs, much of that memory may already be used by other programs, device drivers, and the like. It may even be configured as "expanded" memory instead of "extended" memory.

If you're running DOS 6.0 or later, you can use the included MemMaker routine to try and free up more memory. Simply type "memmak-er" and hit Enter at the DOS prompt. Follow the onscreen instructions, and when it asks whether any of your programs require Expanded Memory, hit the N key and press Enter. MemMaker will optimize your computer and configure it to use extended memory.

Disk cache programs, including Microsoft's SmartDrive, can also chew up large amounts of extended memory. Use a text editor like MS-DOS EDIT to check your AUTOEXEC.BAT file for a line that contains SMARTDRV.EXE. If you find one, put the letters "REM" in front of it. Save the file, then restart your computer. Simply eliminating the cache may free up enough memory to run the game.

If that doesn't work—or if you're trying to get the game running under Windows 95—give Interplay's tech support a call at 714-553-6678, or send them a message at support@interplay.com.

Good luck!

Fax, mail, or e-mail your queries to the S.O.S. staff at:

- PC Entertainment
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- Fax: 415-349-7781
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ADVERTISER	PAGE	ADVERTISER	PAGE
7th Level	57	Mission Control (Digital)	109
Acclaim (The D)	52-53	Multivision Electronics	107
Acclaim (College Slam)	98-99	New World Computing	65
Activision (Hyperblade)	69	Nu Millenia (Surfology)	72
Activision (Zork Nemesis)	86-87	Nu Millenia (Eureka)	48
Activision (Spycraft)	7	Ocean of America	92-95
ActSoft, Inc	107	Parsoft	106
Aplicom	108	Philips Interactive (Fighter)	26
Atari	89	Philips Interactive (Alien)	49
Columbia House	15	Philips Interactive (Burn)	81
Creative Labs	C4	Philips (Gear Heads)	27, 29, 31, 33
Domark	47	Philips (BRC)	between 32 & 33
FormGen (Duke Nukem)	23	Pulse	42-43
FormGen (Black Knight)	55	R & G	107
FormGen (Xeno Phage)	45	Sanctuary Woods	28
FormGen (Extreme Rise)	9	Sierra On-Line (Thunder)	30
GTE	C2-1	Sierra On-Line (Mission)	24
IFTW Books	32	Sierra On-Line (Earthsiege)	73
Interactive Magic	51	Sierra On-Line (Ancient)	112-C3
JVC	79	Sir Tech Software	105
Looking Glass (Trained)	59	Sirius Publishing	2-3
Looking Glass (Assembled)	61	Software of the Month	107
Looking Glass (Kick)	63	Spectrum HoloByte	19
LucasArts	75	Strategic Sims (Silent Hunter)	97
Microforum	13	Strategic Sims (Fantasy)	83
MicroProse	71	Strategic Sims (Renegade)	67
Mindscape	77	Xatrix	21
Mission Control (IQ sub)	110-111		

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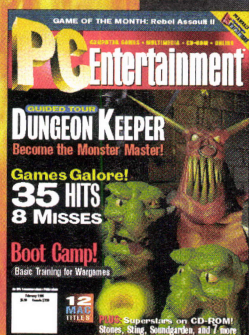
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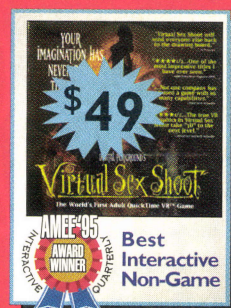
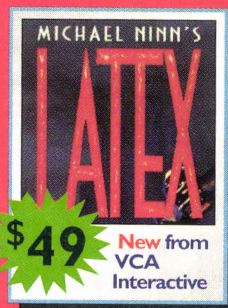
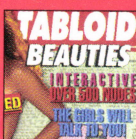
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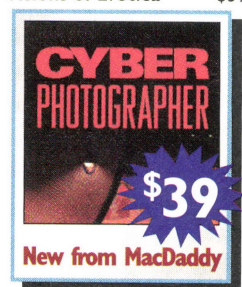
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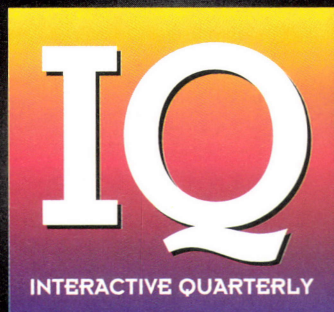
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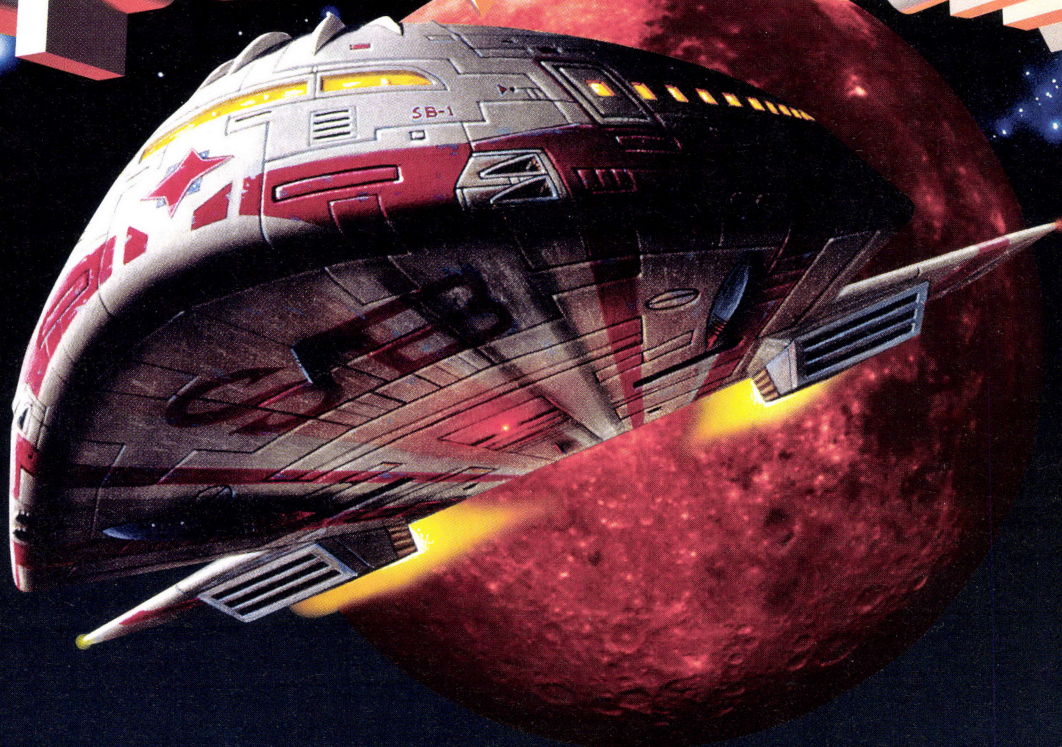
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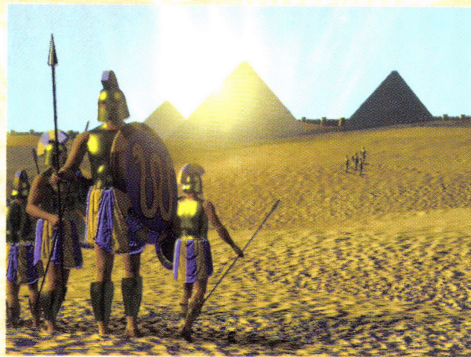
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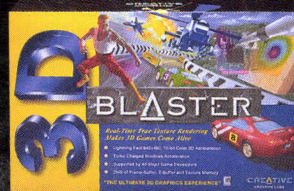
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